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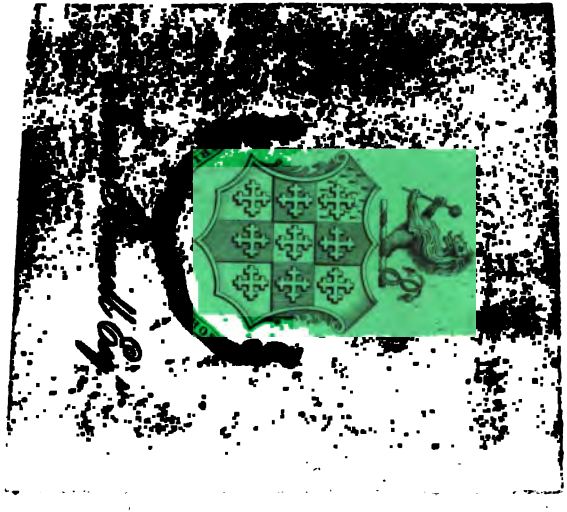

THE

MISTAKES OF THE HEART:

OR,

MEMOIRS

OF

LADY CAROLINA PELHAM

AND

LADY VICTORIA NEVIL.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

PUBLISHED BY

M. TREYSSAC DE VERGY,
Counsellor in the Parliaments of Paris and Bourdeaux.

At feeling hearts I fling, nor ever miss the game.

PRIOR.

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MEMOIRS, &c.

LETTER I.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

LORD Fanfly was an hour with Lady Pelham yeſterday—an hour ſoliciting on his knee, that I might abhor the day in which I was born. How elſe could it be had he obtained my mother's conſent! a mother to whoſe will I would fall a voluntary victim rather than diſpleaſe, rather than make her unhappy. Believe me, Victoria, I would readily forfeit my own exiſtence could it ſave her but a tear: I would ſpurn the ſtruggles of nature, haſten to annihila-

tion, and ſmile away the ſufferings of my heart.

Did you know but half the obligations I owe to Lady Pelham, your ſurpriſe would ceaſe, Victoria; you would even wonder at the weakneſs of my expreſſion.—— I ſhould be a monſter were I to harbour a thought, an affection, which ſhe would not both approve and delight in.

Know that in the bloom of her days, when youth, rank, and beauty, diſplayed all their enticements, and raviſhingly pointed to gaiety and diſſipation:—when love and pleaſure followed every ſtep, applauded every grace, indulged every deſire:—when the moſt amiable men courted her ſmiles, and gloried in her eſteem:—when all who thought, looked, or ſpoke, tempted her into a compliance with the

foibles

foibles of nature and faſhion—know, that Lord Pelham and his ſiſter, the happy Carolina, were the ſole objects of her care—ſhe forgot ſhe was young and handſome, to remember ſolely ſhe was a mother.

How many ſacrifices neceſſarily made to her tenderneſs for us!—how many troubles generouſly overlooked to help our heedleſs infancy, correct vitiated nature, and perfect our education!——

The night in which my father died—a night, Victoria, never to be rooted out of my memory——he ſent for Lady Pelham, who, loſt in ſorrow at his having ſeemingly breathed his laſt, had juſt left his room. Struck with the unexpected meſſage, ſhe ſtarted up, ſeized my hand, and flew to him.

What a ſight, Victoria!—Though but ten years of age, my heart, grown old in filial love, felt all the agonies of the diſtreſsful ſcene.—My mother, with a wild eye, unſteady ſtep, and grief in every feature, ſunk upon the bed.——

Revived by the warmth of her tears, he raiſed her hand to his lips.——

Death draws near, Julia—I already feel it—To die!—and I was ſo happy in thee—ſo happy in my children!—Thy deſpondency is torment—I know all thy worth, Julia—and I muſt leave thee!—

Lady Pelham, dead to all emotions but thoſe of certain miſery, opened her lips—the words expired on her chilled tongue.

I have but a few moments to remain with thee, Julia—Thou my Carolina.—

Then a cold fit invaded every nerve—I thought, Victoria, I had loſt the beſt of fathers.

Death, reſumed he with a feeble voice, and ſtruggling with the faintneſs of his ſpirits—Death longs for his prey—Julia, I hardly ſee thee—ſoon will I ſee thee no more.—

He ſhed a few tears, ſighed, and preſſed her hand to his heart.

Julia, by my will the fate of Carolina is fixed.—Lord Fanfly is the huſband deſtined for her——ſhe muſt be his—my word is given—promiſe it ſhall be kept.—

Promiſe! exclaimed my mother, ſtarting at the unforeſeen requeſt, promiſe!—Ah, Pelham!—What have you ſaid?—What have you done?—

Depend on my love for thee to ſee Carolina happy—I'll direct her heart agreeable to thy choice—but will lay it under no conſtraint—Why ſhould ſhe be a ſlave when I owed thee to my liberty?—

My father ſeemed to conſider, to relent—his eyes, melted with tenderneſs, were ſucceſſively fixed on my mother and me.——He ſtrove to ſmile, to tender us his hand—to utter a recantation——vain efforts, Victoria, my father was no more.

Judge

Judge now of Lady Pelham's character: reflect on the circumſtances, and fix, if you dare, the degree of love and gratitude my generous and tender mother ought to inſpire me with.

London—176—

LETTER II.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

WHAT alterations, dear Frederick, does not love cauſe in our manners and principles, when the object that inſpires it rules over a feeling heart! What vices, what virtues, are not ſucceſſively eſteemed or neglected according to the noble or ungenerous temper of the woman we adore!

Nature confidently launches into every contradiction, and aſſumes, as her own, the genuine features of honour or diſhoneſty:—ſtrenuous aſſertor of her primitive

tive rights, ſhe reaſons, combats, and ever comes off with ſucceſs.

A man's ſoul is diſſolved into that of his miſtreſs; he eagerly adopts her ſentiments, her paſſions, and her character. 'Tis a delirium not to be cured by reaſon—there is no accounting for our implicit obedience to the call of beauty: it overwhelms the underſtanding, ſeizes on every organ, and allows neither time nor power to queſtion its authority.

I hardly have a look, a thought, a deſire, which are not in open defiance to my own heart, whenever I viſit at Brenton-hall. Each word, each motion of Victoria, heightening the charm of her beauty, and adding to the native luſtre of her virtues, my eyes and my tongue

are at perpetual enmity———at a perpetual loſs for an expreſſion adapted to my love and her dignity. The ſport of paſſion, pride, fear, or delicacy, I am by turns under their empire, ſubjected to their laws, or in rebellion againſt them.

I have attentively watched for a fault in her ſhape, for an error in her mind, for a vice in her ſoul.—I have not one reaſon to exclaim againſt love, not one motive for wiſhing to be free.

Were Victoria imperious or diſdainful, I would withſtand the utmoſt power of her beauty—I would—but the diſcreet girl gives her lovers no temptation to injure her virtue: ſhe eraſes the leaſt propenſity to evil from their hearts.——How artleſsly does ſhe compel deſire to die upon my lips, to fly from my countenance!

Her

Her modeſty—how engaging muſt that quality be which can betray me into a diffidence of my own merit, ſoften the fierceneſs of my unruly ſpirit, and ſo highly prepoſſeſs me in favour of her ſex!

Muſt I then reaſon ſolely after the mode of Victoria—wait for thinking till ſhe has thought——fall in with her peculiar humour?——Is not this ſlavery the moſt grievous in nature?—Shall I exclude myſelf wholly from my own being—give the lie to my opinion of evil and good——differ in nothing from another's judgment!——May I not claim from my own deſerts a right to her eſteem, to her love!——Muſt I expect it as a favour!—and I can ſtill ſubmit and adore!——Oh, Frederick, what a ſhame, what a ſhame!——

How

How happy is it for the honour of humanity, that the miſtreſſes of kings, popes, and mighty conquerors, were never tempted into the ſublime folly of being the founders of new religions!

What impertinent tenets might have prevailed, had not a Roxana, a Morazia, or a Pompadour, diſdained to impoſe on men, and cheat them of their reaſon?—

What ſo perſuaſive as beauty? Who can long oppoſe its eloquence, or reſiſt its entreaties? Where is the man who would not prevent the moſt ſecret wiſh of the woman he loves? Are not her delights his ſole and ſupreme happineſs——her diſpleaſure his moſt excruciating pain—her tears—Who would not melt into all the tenderneſs of love, at the ſight of a tear trickling from the lovely eye———Who would

would not immediately ſtop it with a "Command—I obey."

Were my authority for a few months acknowledged, how grateful to mankind would be my paſſion for Victoria! Each ſmile ſhould dictate an edict in favour of liberty——each kiſs diffuſe a general content—all would partake of my joy and be happy in my love.

Modiſh-hall,——176——

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LETTER III.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

THE counſels of friendſhip do but glance on a faſcinated fancy, whilſt the moſt trivial circumſtance gives reaſon its natural ſtrength, and deprives paſſion of its uſurped authority. When the ſoul is not beſet with its wonted deſires, the ſenſes are no longer ſuffered to teach, to delude and to dictate.

I ordered on Thurſday laſt ſome patterns of ſilk to be brought me. Mr. Froſby admired one, proteſted that the deſign was entirely new, and that the colour would ſuit my features to a miracle.

I was inclined to believe him when Sir John looked at it, then at me, then at Froſby, then ſilently ſat down.

This he likes not, ſaid I to myſelf, and I gazed on thoſe that were upon the table.

None of them, my Lady, ſaid Mr. Froſby, comes near the beauty of the former.—

I made no anſwer, and continued to gaze.

Sir John careleſsly took up a pattern, laid it on my ſhoulder, as to judge of its effect, and with a ſmile placed it before me.

This

This is his choice, thought I—it ſhall be mine, and I preſently fixed upon it.

I whiſpered my choice to Sophy, and to-day have I appeared in the ſilk the ſmile of Sir John had pointed out to me.

I put it on with uncommon alacrity, and for the firſt time took a delight in dreſſing.

Sophy told me I looked more charming than ever.—That gown, added ſhe, is an honour to Sir John's taſte.

Conſcious I had encouraged her to ſay ſo, I had not the heart to chide her, though a bluſh made its way to my cheek.

On entering the drawing room, Mr. Froſby was ſtruck mute at the ſight of my dreſs—Sir John ſaw but me—his eyes ſpoke of love, not of gratitude. He took no notice of my dreſs, Carolina——How he would have diſconcerted me had he ventured one glance expreſſive of the favour I had done him!—How his diſcretion pleaſed me!——

Mr. Froſby was abſolutely out of humour. The fawnings of my lap-dog were no longer agreeable———he darted a look of anger at the glaſs which reflected me to Sir John, and could not patiently hear the ruſtling of the ſilk.

In

In the evening Mr. Froſby preſented me an handful of flowers, Sir John a ſingle violet: I placed this in my hair, and negligently threw the other upon a marble ſlab.

Mr. Froſby propoſed whiſt——I had the head-ache.——Ten minutes after Sir John propoſed a game at quadrille——I accepted it. *Fidele* was very nigh falling a victim to the diſpleaſure of Mr. Froſby. The poor creature leaping on his knee at the very inſtant I roſe up to go to cards, he flung him almoſt breathleſs on the floor. I ſhrieked——Sir John flew to *Fidele*, and taking him in his arms, by the tendereſt careſſes brought him to life again.

Senſible

Senſible of his fault, Mr. Froſby made an apology———and ſlyly congratulated me on my recovery.———I was diſpleaſed——ſpare thy comments.

Brenton-hall—176—

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LETTER IV.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

HOW exquiſite is an unexpected happineſs!——Never talk of pleaſures offering themſelves at our firſt call—theſe are hardly ſenſations——theſe can hardly ſweeten the bitter draught of life.

It was but nine this morning, when the trampling of horſes, and the noiſe of ſervants, announced the arrival of Lord Pelham from New-market. Uneaſy at ſo early and ſudden a return, I immediately

diately ſlipped on a gown, and ringing for Lucy, hurried to my dreſſing-room.

Carolina! Carolina!—Where are you, Carolina?—

Here I am, dear brother——

And ſtepping towards him——

So unexpectedly, and at nine! you frighten me, brother—are you well?——

And I offered him my cheek.

On thy account only, Carolina, am I come to town ſooner than I intended. I would not keep from thee an hour the knowledge of what I have done to make thee perfectly eaſy and happy.

Had

Had I been acquainted with thy anxiety, long ago, Carolina, had I freed thee from it—long ago had Lord Fanfly ceaſed to diſquiet thee—no more, ſiſter, haſt thou to fear his perſecutions.———I have ſeen him—he knows thou art free, and that thy hand ſhall be only beſtowed by thy heart.———

Brother!———

'Twas all I could ſay, and I faintly leaned my head upon his boſom.

My eagerneſs to pleaſe thee, Carolina, has defeated my prudence.———Friendſhip has betrayed me into indiſcretion—forgive———

How can I repay ſo much goodneſs and generoſity———

By

By never mentioning it, Carolina.—— This morning Lady Pelham and I will ſettle thy fortune, and put it into thy own hands, that no unforeſeen event may cheat thee of thy natural right to the diſpoſal of thy ſelf.——I hate conſtraint on a noble heart—be free, ſiſter, be free as thou deſerveſt.

To Lady Pelham we are both indebted, thou for the end of thy troubles, I for the pleaſure of obliging thee.——This letter I received at Newmarket.

FREDERICK.

Lord Fanfly has followed you to the races. His intention is to aſk your conſent, and fix the day of his marriage with your

your ſiſter. Believe me, your conſent will be death to Carolina.

JUL. PELHAM.

Affront not thy mother and me, Carolina, and he laid his hand on my lips, with unneceſſary thanks—We know thy ſenſibility.

He then begged a diſh of chocolate in my own appartment, and turned the converſation on thee and Sir John Modiſh.

Though vexed at thy indifference for Sir John, he is extremely pleaſed with the effect it has upon him. He commends his diffidence as the greateſt effort of human virtue, and almoſt thanks thee for thy love to Froſby, which has

ſo

ſo nobly diſplayed the character of his friend.

We had not dwelt long on the praiſes of Sir John, when word was brought that Lord Fanſly was with Lady Pelham.

His love for thee, Carolina, juſtifies the prepoſterous behaviour.——Had he entirely relied on my denial——had he not made a ſecond attempt to obtain thee, far from deſerving the pity I cannot refuſe his diſappointment, he would have ſunk below my contempt——Stop the tear of gratitude, Carolina——though it be an honour to thy heart, it is an inſult to my virtue.———

I never doubted your friendſhip, brother—but in this age ſuch uncommon goodneſs——ſuch uncommon excellence when ſouls are ſo degenerated—Don't frown upon me——I am ſilent.

Soon after, Lady Pelham came to partake of the joy ſhe had cauſed—Why tell thee, Victoria, what ſhe did—— what ſhe ſaid—have I not already told thee ſhe is a mother?

London—1776—

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LETTER V.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

FREDERICK, I——no: thou wouldſt ſay I am again turned fool. Thy reaſon—the devil take thy reaſon——it diſconcerts me——Why made I thee the confident of my paſſion for Victoria? I was aſſuredly bewitched——there ſhould have been no correſpondence between thy cool head and my enflamed heart——their language is abſolutely the reverſe of each other——Thou read'ſt the characters of love, but knoweſt thou how to expreſs them? To thee they are folly——to me ſenſe and

wit.—Come hither, Frederick——Victoria will teach thee to feel; in the ſunſhine of her ſmiles thou wilt become a man——ſhe will look at thee——then, Frederick, ſhalt thou underſtand me.

E N D.

LETTER VI.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

I Know not, Carolina, how it is with the hearts of men, but ſurely none was ever more obſcure and intricate than that of your Victoria.

I am afraid our ſex are too heedleſs—— too ſanguine—too full of airy notions, to poſſeſs the ſoul polite and enamoured men have complimented us with——What affinity can that ſoul have with the fooliſh work we perpetually ſet it upon?——— How can it participate of paſſions?——

An heavenly ſubſtance ſlave to the circulation of the blood !———Nature, Carolina, ſo ſimple in her operations, never thought of the many different and contradictory attributes, which we are told neceſſarily enter into our compoſition—and men no more than women have to boaſt.—Be that as it will, I will unfeignedly open to you that part of mine they call a heart, which they have made the ſeat of feelings as well as the repoſitory of our ſecrets, though I am ſure it is the moſt talkative, indiſcreet and inconſiſtent of all confidents.

Mrs. Brenton, to divert me from a gravity, which ſhe remarked ſat very unbecoming upon me, propoſed ſending an invitation to ſeveral ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

Chuſe

Chuſe your company, Victoria, and write the cards in my name.

I ſat down—I began.

Don't forget Sir John Modiſh.
Sir John !———

His name was already written, Carolina.—Thoughtleſs Victoria ! ſaid I to myſelf—and I tore the card.—

Why ſhould we remember a man we have not ſeen theſe five days ?—

Five days !——muſt he be neglected for an abſence of five days ?

So, ſo, ſaid I again, can I have nothing in my heart, but it muſt directly fly to my tongue ?——

Seeing my aunt remained ſilent, I went on and finiſhed the cards.

Mrs.

Mrs. Brenton looking on them—

Then you are not for a concert, Victoria?—

Undoubtedly I am, dear Madam. How came you to think I was not?—

By your not inviting the only performer—

The only performer!—His name, dear aunt? and I—

Why Sir John Modish.—Without him what a poor concert!—

Poor, indeed!—dared I to repeat after her.

I am glad we agree, Victoria.—

I wrote——the cards were ſent.

All, Carolina, all promiſed to come, but Sir John, who "had it not in his "power to wait upon us."—Not in his power, Carolina!—Mrs. Brenton was greatly diſpleaſed—ſhe was certain the concert would come to nothing.

Miſs Elliſon, Mr. Froſby, and I, dear aunt, will do our utmoſt to pleaſe you.—

Elliſon!——Froſby!——

And ſhe ſhrugged up her ſhoulder with a ſmile bordering on contempt.——In the name of heaven, never mention Elliſon and Froſby, whilſt we have a Sir John Modiſh.

I hope, reſumed ſhe after ſome minutes reflection, no body has given Sir John any diſlike to Brenton-hall.—Though they ſay he has been, and ſtill is, a daily ſinner, we are no ſaints, Victoria.——Detraction, which never ſcruples to add to the frailties of men, and ſeldom reſpects the pureſt innocence, is riſen to ſuch audacity, that I always diſtruſt the ill ſpoke againſt any individual, whoſe outward behaviour has never deviated from that of a man of honour.

Let not thy ear liſten to ſlander, Victoria—diſbelieve thoſe that would preſume to defame in thy preſence the man who never dealt diſhoneſtly with thee. It is the language of the baſe.—Has my Victoria any objections to the viſits of Sir John?——

Far be from me the thought of ſlighting the man my aunt reſpects.——

Perhaps

Perhaps Mr. Froſby thinks him troubleſome.——

On what right?——

What right, Victoria?—Does he not love thee?—Is Sir John ſo inſignificant as not to frighten a lover?—Had his preſence and aſſiduity rendered Mr. Froſby miſerable, had he required thee not to ſee, or converſe with Sir John—few, very few, Victoria, could ſo plauſibly colour their ſenſeleſs jealouſy.—

Had Froſby been ſo unjuſt—but he never was——

Would you have puniſhed him, Victoria, for having acted in character?——

Who ever acknowledged the propriety of an inſult?——

Who

Who ever ſaw an inſult where none was offered?—

Are the wanderings of the heart of ſo ſacred a nature as to brave an appeal to reaſon?—

Love, Victoria, hates reaſoning:—it is in its own cauſe both judge and party.—If reaſon meddles in the quarrel, love is no more.—

I hope not, ſighed I, turning to the window.

Carolina! what do you now think of your Victoria?—How dangerous to our ſex is vanity!—why cannot we coldly ſuffer neglect, though ſo often wiſhed for?—

Brenton-hall—176—

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LETTER VII.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

FIVE days, Frederick, have I been ſecreted from the eye of the deſpotic Victoria——five days weighing, with the ſcale of ſelf-intereſt, my love, and her indifference—five days allowing my fancy to riot on each charm of Lady Belmour——yet am I ſtill adoring the virtues of Victoria, extolling her beauty, ready to proſtrate though certain to be rejected.

Far from abating the fire of paſſion, ſolitude either renews the flame, or adds to its fury. Neceſſarily centred in the beloved

loved thought by the abſence of other objects, does not its illuſion naturally encreaſe and feed the luxuriant deſire? What advantages do not the ladies gain by the reveries of their lovers! Safely may they intruſt our imagination with their concerns——what more powerful protector could they have than the very creator of their charms, and the pleaſures they procure?—

Yes—I am determined:—I will not go. 'Tis raſhneſs, not bravery, heedleſsly to expoſe one's-ſelf to an infallible danger, when we may retreat with honour.—I will not go.———O Love! envy not Spite this triumph over thee!———I will not go.

I have juſt ſent Mrs. Brenton an apology as polite as wit and careleſsneſs could

could contrive.———I wonder how my heart happened not to dictate——Prudence held the pen——wrote——Prudence!———I might have ſpent a whole evening with Lady Victoria——a whole evening!—Do I already repent?—

Modiſh-hall—176—

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LETTER VIII.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

LORD Fanfly, my moſt paſſionate lover, has proudly taken his leave, Victoria—proudly, without one tear—— without even reproaching me with my inſenſibility.——He is gone to Paris, there to be finiſhed, I preſume, in the glorious endowment of veiling his ignorance and ſtupidity under the bragging air of ſelf-ſufficiency.

Greatly is Lord Fanfly in need of being perfected by the courtiers of Verſailles,

ties, and the beaus of Paris, in the art of wearing a ſhameleſs countenance.——

When he comes back, he will confidently talk, offer advice, and give his opinion—he will glory in his cook and his taylor, laugh at religion, diſdain his country, never ſmile, always laugh—and may-be, excel his very maſters.———

But for this ſpecious outſide, how many of our great men——of our fine ladies, would die away their ſenſeleſs exiſtence! For this alone, how many women are admired, how many men extolled, whom Nature had ſolely produced for ſitting, walking, talking, or dreſſing unnoticed!———

How deſerted, Victoria, our faſhionable levees, were minions obliged to praiſe

praiſe but the genuine qualities of their worthleſs protectors!

Who amongſt them would tell one courtier he is a fool, another he is a knave, this he baſely ſold his country, that he daily brings it to contempt, by preferring his own daſtardly creatures to the firſt poſts of the ſtate?—None ſurely but the free, none but patriots, would dare to pull off the dignified robes, under which they myſteriouſly lie, as ſafe from our vain indignation as the rotten bones of a canonized rogue in his gilded ſhrine.—None but the free!—where are they?—Name me a climate, Victoria, under which there are no wants, no paſſions, no ſelf-love—under which fools poſſeſs not the higheſt places of truſt and honour—under which the dear French aſſurance does not defy our ſagacity,

ſagacity, and impoſe on our underſtanding—Name me that climate, Victoria, then——Shall I always obey the preſent calls of fancy?——Why did I mention Lord Fanſly but to beg your condolence? Have I not acted as a true woman?—If ſo, forgive.

12 o'clock.

I muſt reſt contented, it ſeems, with Lord Pelerſton---Mighty agreeable this!—Thanks to the inefficacy of my charms, he is the only man I have now at command.——He is, no doubt, extremely happy in being alone.—But was he to abate of his affection for me, was he—I'll ſtep to the glaſs.

I am diſheartened, though encouraged, by the obliging counſellor.—Tranſient beauty!--I ſhould hate Lord Pelerſton had he been captivated by an allurement I owe to Nature and not to myſelf.—What are charms that may vaniſh the hour after they have been admired and cauſed the moſt enchanting illuſion?——Have I not neglected the improvement of my mind?—Have I not been too careleſs of the only accompliſhments which will leave a lover no regret for the loſs of his liberty?——

Victoria will readily agree with her Carolina that beauty is oftner a misfortune than an advantage. We are commonly ſo haughty, ſo ſtupid, when we are handſome, that I wonder we don't loſe by our ſpeech and behaviour what we gain by our looks.——

It

It is with a beauty as with a tyrant. Can ſhe hear but flattery? Do not ſlaves watch her nod, ready to gueſs—ſtill readier to obey?—How ſhould not ſhe be intoxicated with vanity, regardleſs of true merit, and truſt her fate to her charms, and the extreme ſenſibility of the numbers who throng to obtain a glance of her eye, and be made happy in her ſmiles?—Eaſily—too eaſily, Victoria, do we confide in the lovely features, the delicate ſhape, the graceful carriage, and the melodious voice:—too eaſily do we receive the incenſe, delight in the offerings, and glory—and ſhare in the extaſy of our adorers.—

How can a beauty queſtion the reſiſtleſs power which Nature has made inſeparable from her, when men inceſſantly heighten her certainty of it?—Is ſhe not every where

where entertained with ſighs, deſires, and tranſports? Does any man heſitate to gaze—to pray—any woman to cenſure, or burn with envy?

Will ſhe in the midſt of her greatneſs—in the full enjoyment of undiſputed empire, think ſhe is hourly on the verge of diſgrace?—Few, Victoria, but few will reflect on the certain end of their glory, and damp the preſent joy with fears of a futurity they perhaps may never ſee.

Let us, Victoria, aſcribe to lucky circumſtances, and the tender attention of our parents, the preference we have given to the qualities of the mind over thoſe of nature.—Had we not been conſtantly told how ineſtimable

the firſt are, how precarious the latter, we ſhould now perhaps have been wrapt up in ignorance, vanity and folly.——A digreſſion again!—and you will patiently bear with the wandering Carolina!—Leſt I ſhould ramble once more, I abruptly ſubſcribe myſelf your

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LETTER IX.

Lady Victoria Nevil to Lady Carolina Pelham.

HOW prepoſterous, Carolina, if, from a few ſlights of my vanity, you ſhould infer that Sir John has ſtolen into my heart! Though I might forgive it for your extreme partiality to him, be ſilent, leſt repenting of my ſincerity, I ſhould refrain from diſcloſing to you my unexpected thoughts, and unuſual feelings.——But why ſhould I mind your opinion?—I love not Sir John—Well then, Carolina, indulge your fancy, and determine at your pleaſure how it is, or how it is not, with your Victoria.

I give thee full power to ramble at diſcretion, to think, write, and judge as ridiculouſly as thou wilt.

That thou may'ſt not be at a loſs to ſupport the opinion thy unerring ſagacity ſhall be pleaſed to favour, I will tell thee all that has within theſe few weeks happened to me—I will lay my heart before thee.—Then, Carolina, then perhaps thou wilt know as little, be as uncertain—but no matter for that.—

I will ingenuouſly confeſs, that the behaviour of Sir John being conſtantly polite, reſpectful, and obliging to Mr. Froſby and me, my prejudices ſubſided—I ſaw him with pleaſure—and at laſt ſet a value on his endeavours to deſerve my eſteem.

Believe that my certainty of his love, and his generoſity in ſilencing it, operated not a little to inſtate him in my favour—believe it, Carolina, and I will not be offended.

Few, ſaid I often, reflecting on his accompliſhments, few would fear to render me unhappy by their perſecutions—none perhaps would ſcruple to declare, to hope, and even to queſtion my taſte in my love for Froſby.

This refined behaviour of Sir John flattered me the more, as I expected leſs delicacy from him. It was ſo manifeſtly the reverſe of his principles, that looking on it as my own work, I could not help thanking him in my heart, for the glorious condeſcenſion I had forced him to.

Was

Was it my virtue or my pride which was ſo ſenſibly affected with the pleaſing contraſt?—This, Carolina, I leave to thee to examine and to reſolve, as being a more profound adept in the art of diſtinguiſhing paſſion from ſentiment, and the feelings of the heart from the ſallies of imagination.—To me it belongs to relate, to thee to analyſe, compare and decide.

Though Sir John's reſerve encreaſed at every viſit, he was not leſs amiable, leſs entertaining, leſs happy in the amuſements he procured us. His travels were an inexhauſtible topic—His action is noble, eaſy, inſinuating, and admirably ſets off the charms of his elocution.—He ſpeaks—not to ſpeak, but to pleaſe—ever ſucceſsful is his attempt—Glance,

Carolina, over the word attempt, for—let me not tell thee the why.—

Muſic afforded him perpetual opportunities to diſplay an unwearied complaiſance in complying with the repeated encores of my enchanted aunt.—Never was ſhe tired with liſtening, never was he tired with gratifying her humour.

Wedneſday 11 o'Clock.

Often, when alone with Sir John, has he, on a ſudden, taken my hand—ſtolen it half way to his lips—let it go immediately, and begun a lively converſation on ſubjects which he knew I liked, or was tolerably verſed in.

I am a ſtranger to the art he employed; this you muſt diſcover, Carolina, but I had always a better opinion of my own wit and taſte after having converſed with him.

My aunt daily compliments me on the improvement I have made, theſe five weeks, in knowledge of the world, and applauds the elegance of my diction, the propriety of my remarks, and the accuracy of my deſigns.—She whiſpers alſo, but very ſoftly, that my ſhape is more free, my curtſies leſs confuſed, and my ſighs, mind this, Carolina, and my ſighs leſs frequent.

Froſby complains of my coldneſs.—He ſays that ſince Sir John has viſited familiarly at Brenton-hall, I receive him not with the ſame ſmiles as before.—Twice

has he haughtily required me to tell him my true motive for continuing, of late, ſo long in the library.—He thought I once attended more carefully to my dreſs, and has often taken a real pique at my favouring Sir John with a tune, a noſe-gay, or a walk in the garden.

Should not I be very amiable, Carolina, were I ignorant, impertinent, and ill-natured? Don't you think that vanity more than love is concerned in his diſpleaſure? Would not he otherwiſe be more careful of my glory?—To pride in Sir John being a witneſs of my inclination for him!—Is not this both indelicate and ungenerous?—Can he wiſh to make himſelf happy by another's pain?—Had Sir John the ſame thought!—did he dare to expreſs it!———How ſurpriſing his moderation, yet how commendable!

Can

Can a man of ſo fiery a diſpoſition—and he loves me, you ſay!—— I am glad you were deceived, Carolina.

One day—one day, do I ſay!—every day, Carolina, I read in the looks, of Sir John, "Victoria! were I certain you "loved not Froſby, and that my homage "would not be thought unworthy, how "happy!"—Then, Carolina, I turn my eyes from him, and will read no more.

1 o'Clock.

How I gradually came to rejoice in the preſence of Sir John, and to miſs him when he was gone, you muſt inquire in your conjuring book, Carolina.

I will not tell thee, leſt I ſhould too powerfully add to the virtue of thy magical wand, that more than once I could not help echoing Mrs. Brenton in her praiſes of Sir John, and that I often thought were his morals as unqueſtionable as his wit and good-nature, it might prove dangerous to ſee him.—Whence that reflection aroſe, I have not examined, and as I will not recollect the time and the circumſtances which cauſed it, for fear of an emotion my prudence bids me avoid, great as thy ſkill is, thou wilt be unable, I doubt, infallibly to aſſign its genuine origin.

I had ſo well habituated myſelf to the viſits of Sir John, and ſo pleaſing was his converſation, that I was ſome times tempted to think the day loſt in which I had not ſeen him. Not that I had been with-

without agreeable company, or Frosby had been less courteous, less refined, in his endeavours to fix my attention, but then—I hate these "thens"—I'll write them no more.—

I have said "courteous and refined," why not "loving and ingenuous?"—"endeavours!"—Carolina! do I know what I write?

A fortnight ago, two days passed without our hearing from Sir John—the third, my harpsichord was untunable—my ear—I had no ear—I sat to draw—the paper was wasted—I took up Pope's Essay on Man——senseless! exclaimed I, and it dropped on the floor.—Next I unfolded some of Frosby's letters—how tedious, Carolina!—my heart beat quick.—Certainly, said I, all is not right within——

Unwilling, however, to inquire into the extraordinary agitation of my ſpirits, I attempted to ſhake of the anxious thought, by ſucceſſively varying the objects and the ſcene of my diverſions—I was not abſolutely unſucceſsful—but that heart—that fooliſh heart of mine, Carolina—

Froſby came—how palpable was his indiſcretion!—He began by an unkind air of amazement at the careleſsneſs of my dreſs, and the gravity of my countenance.

I hope, my lady, 'tis not to your health I muſt impute the gloom which hangs upon your lovely features—that negligee—theſe looks—the ſight is ſo extraordinary—you did not expect Sir John Modiſh—otherwiſe you would hardly have ventured to appear ſo different from yourſelf.——

Ven-

Venture!—Had I known, Sir, I was in need of ornaments not to frighten Sir John away, I would undoubtedly have had the precaution to dreſs.—But it is not late—Sir John may come—I'll go and borrow from my toilet the charms you obligingly ſay I want to pleaſe him.——

And dropping a curtſy, I was retiring——

Pray ſtop, my Lady——Tell me plainly, had you thought Sir John was to come, would you not have ſet off your graces to more advantage?——

Not poſſibly on his account, Sir, as till now, I knew not the neceſſity of it.——

How ſevere you are, Lady Victoria!—

Tell me how I am ſo, Mr. Froſby.—

Through my fault—dear Victoria, I was wrong——I own it.

I forgave, ſat down, liſtened, ſpoke, walked, played, ſung—ſtill was the evening very long——ſtill was I abſent, and uneaſy.

The next day, worſe.

The fifth, my reſtleſſneſs grew more ſenſible, and in order to diſpel it, a concert was ordered.

3 o'Clock.

Though I told you in my laſt, Carolina, how I acted with regard to the invitations I ſent by the command of Mrs. Brenton, and my converſation with her relating to Sir John and Mr. Froſby, I left you to gueſs what my thoughts were on Sir John's "not having it in his power" to wait upon us.

Not

Not to anticipate your judgment of them, I will not enter into the nature of the reflections I made, and explain the emotions I felt.—Strive to gueſs—and not to miſtake.

The company was numerous——the men aukward, affected or impertinent—the women either gaping or whiſpering—all the performers full of confidence, loudly warbling what they were going to perform.——

I miſtruſt that ſelf-ſufficiency, whiſpered my aunt—real merit is not ſo preſuming——Oh, Sir John! Sir John! he only could have pleaſed—Go, Victoria, go to thy harpſichord, remember I'll liſten but to thee.

We began——then we began again.—Twice a ſtring of the firſt violin breaking, twice there was a general ſtop—ſeveral from the firſt to the very laſt ſtroke of the bow went naturally out of tune—one turning haſtily a leaf of his muſic book miſtook an allegro for an amoroſo, and perceiving not his error, played it on with the utmoſt unconcern.——An unlucky cough ſeizing on Miſs Elliſon as ſhe was ſinging, *La Buona Figliuola* was thrown aſide, and we had a ſolo on the german flute.

How Mrs. Brenton ſuffered!—how her ſenſible ears were grated!—how ſhe longed for the end of that ſolo!—It was, however, applauded, admired and honoured with a general clap.

Noble

Noble Lord Belmour! how willingly he aſcribed to his taſte the compliments paid to his quality!—

I inwardly ſmiled at the miſtake.

Is it not very convenient to be a Lord? ſaid I to Froſby. Had Lord Belmour been but a commoner, ſhould we have indulged him in his folly?—why, Sir, have not you a coronet?—

Thank you, my lady.——

And for noiſe and confuſion we prepared again.

Mrs. Breaton had the misfortune not to be undeceived in her opinion of the concert: it was as miſerably performed as her fears had preſaged.

Was

Was I in the wrong, Victoria, ſaid ſhe to me, when we had done ſcraping.—Would I had been ſo, but that ſatisfaction was denied me. I hope the ſupper will make amends—— How they have added to my eſteem for Sir John! how great his ſuperiority!———I bluſhed, Victoria, for ſeeing thee amongſt them, though, I will not flatter thee, thou amazingly neglectedſt thyſelf.———

Is not my aunt, Carolina, too attentive to my motions———too partial to Sir John?——

He ſings.———Well—is ſhe to infer from thence that he deſerves her eſteem? Can talents which, at beſt, are only agreeable, compenſate for the abſence of virtue.

virtue.——Perhaps I am too rigid, Carolina.

. . . . . .

Whence my aunt's conſtant praiſes of Sir John?———Are they not inconſiſtent with her friendſhip for Froſby?—It ſeems ſhe takes a delight to open my eyes, ſtrike my ear, fill all my ſenſes with the image of the man who, ſhe ſays, is muſic and melody all over.———

Was I not certain ſhe loves and reſpects Froſby———ſurely ſhe don't believe it unſafe for me to liſten———to echo the eulogiums ſhe laviſhes upon Sir John—otherwiſe ſhe would refrain.———Did you ever know any body ſo rapturouſly fond of muſic as Mrs. Brenton? I muſt adviſe Froſby to improve in it as much as poſſible.——

fable.——His genius is excellent, and to oblige him to emulate Sir John, I'll tell him——what!——What ſhall I tell him?—Nothing.—Adieu.

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LETTER X.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

THOUGH Frosby wears so exultingly the features of an happy lover that my heart often beats ten times in a minute for revenge, yet, Frederick, I cannot take upon me to resent his perpetual attacks upon my pride.———Victoria is his guardian angel———her love for him triumphs over my anger, and softens it into concern——nay into friendship.———I ride, hunt, drink with that man——he talks of the lovely maid——he talks with rapture of her beauty———

expa-

expatiates on her tenderneſs for him—and no look, no motion of mine expreſſes that his converſation is torment, his happineſs death to me!——Curſe on his tongue——curſe on his ſmiling countenance which overwhelm me with ſorrow!——If I thought he knew how much I love—how much I ſuffer by hearing him—no: he knows it not: his good nature could not triumph in my grief.—'Tis I who forever ſtart the murdering topic——who inſpire Froſby with the fond enthuſiaſm by my inceſſant praiſes of Victoria——her name is conſtantly on my lips———I forget 'tis to my rival I ſpeak, if I can but ſpeak of her.——Two hours ago he came here: inſtead of "how do you, Sir?" I aſked "how "does Lady Victoria?" His eyes thanked me as if her health had been his——

as

as if he had been indifferent to all but her——Frederick! of myſelf, not of him muſt I complain.——Myſelf alone will I deteſt———Oh, my heart, my heart, how it is torn!———

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LETTER XI.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

IT has pleaſed my ſweet Lord Pelerſton to favour me with a ſhort fit of jealouſy, that I might be in no doubt of his extreme regard for me.

He probably thought, Victoria, that I wanted this proof of his attachment, and his generoſity could not allow him to refuſe it. How nicely prudent in the choice of his means to take off from me the leaſt tendency to miſtruſt my power over him!—Is it not very kind in him to ſeize the firſt opportunity to convince me that, though nobody has yet offered to compenſate for the abſence of Lord Fanfly,

Fanfly, he relies not, ſo far on his deſerts as to think himſelf in no danger of loſing me?

Jealous men are amiable creatures. How they flatter our vanity by queſtioning their own importance!—how ſagacious in their diſcoveries--diſcreet in their fears---juſt in their reproaches—diverting in their anger!—What abilities are requiſite not to miſtake the capricious character—Don't laugh, Victoria, 'tis not ſo eaſy a matter to be impertinent without offending, and troubleſome without diſguſt.

I ſpeak not of thoſe frantics who ſeem to love but to hate, to talk but to affront, to move but to frighten, to ſmile but to kill,—Heaven guard us from theſe fiery monſters—my blood chills at the very thought

thought of them—Lord Pelerſton is a more tractable animal,

" *Il ſ'allarme aiſément et ſ'appaiſe de même.*"

10 o'Clock.

Lady Preſton and her younger brother having dined with us, we took in the afternoon an airing to Clapham. At our return, Lord Pelerſton, who had waited for me half an hour in the drawing-room, approached my ear—

To the country !—without me !—how barbarous !—Barbarous indeed ! anſwered I ſmiling, the more ſo, as we had charming weather, and were extremely happy—

Happy, my Lady !

And he caſt an eye on Mr. Preſton.

Mr.

Mr. Preſton, Victoria, is a diſcreet youth, bleſt with the lively bloom of eighteen. Lately come from the Univerſity, he left behind him the garb of a pedant to aſſume that of a fine gentleman.

His manners are free, eaſy, and decent, ſpite of the contagious air of the claſſic world. One would ſay he has been educated by men of ſenſe, ſo great is his modeſty, his reſerve, his taſte for polite company, his reſpect for the ſocial duties.

Come, are we to be grave now after ſo much gaiety?

It ſhan't be my fault if we are ſo, ſaid Mr. Preſton ſmiling.

I take your word, Sir—you have too much wit to ſuffer dulneſs to intrude where you are.—I own I have ſeldom ſpent ſo agreeable an afternoon.—

How kind, my Lady !—

Kind ! ſay True, Sir.—

What a flatterer !—

Will you inſiſt, Sir, on denying your-ſelf juſtice ?—

Did you neglect to pleaſe ?—

Shall I believe I was ſucceſsful ?—

Did we appear tired, Sir ?—had You the vapours, Lady Preſton ?

As it is not me my brother intended to pleaſe, give me leave not to thank him for the vapours I had not.—

Well ſaid, ſiſter, keep then thy gratitude to thyſelf—'tis enough that Lady Carolina regrets not the few hours I have paſſed with her.—

Is Lord Pelerſton determined not to favour us with one word ? asked Lady Preſton.—

I was

I was afraid, Madam, to interrupt theſe effuſions of the heart—Is not my diſcretion very commendable, Lady Caro-lina?—

Effuſions of the heart!—diſcretion!—I'll puniſh him, ſaid I to myſelf.

Very much ſo, my Lord—whatever you do is à propos.—

And turning to Mr. Preſton—I hope, Sir, you have no longer any doubts of the pleaſure your company has afforded me—

They ſubſiſt no longer, my Lady: I'll indulge my vanity with the fancy.

And the lovely youth kiſſed my hand.

Lord Pelerſton roſe up, endeavouring to hide an uneaſy look.

Surely, thought I, the man is mad—What does he mean by that look?——Diſpleaſed for a jeſt!—diſturbed for a

kiſs!—how fooliſh!—I muſt plague him.

Then I liſtened to the ſprightly trifler, excited his mirth, and ſupported it with ſmiles, lively anſwers, and taps of my fan.

2 o'Clock.

Mr. Preſton behaved as if he had read my mind. He fell in ſo heartily with my project, that he diſplayed to admiration all the graces peculiar to ingenuity, humour and vivacity: his eyes ſhone with an uncommon fire, and his countenance, enlivened by the ſatisfaction he enjoyed, was feelingly beautiful.

So apparent was my partiality for the young gentleman, that Lord Pelerſton grew at laſt abſolutely ſuſpicious.

Having

Having ventured a few words I pretended not to hear, he inſtantly mimicked my indifference, and racked his imagination to keep it up.

I am afraid, ſaid I to Lady Preſton, our converſation is too childiſh for his Lordſhip. I beg you will ſtart a ſubject more adapted to his taſte, that he may be releaſed from ſo ſevere a ſilence.—

Start it yourſelf, Madam, for I hate to be deſignedly grave. I will not prefer ſerioufneſs to gaiety—the choice is abſurd—

Then, my Lord, you muſt yourſelf give the ſubject, for none of us, it ſeems, are able to find it.—

The attack, though fierce, proved ineffectual. The good Lord, in whoſe breaſt ſorrow was never a welcome gueſt

thought proper to remove the odious ſenſation, and to look ſweetly on his Carolina.

I am ſorry, Ladies, my ſilence ſhould have given you room to ſuſpect my judgment.—What topic more agreeable than love!

Dear my Lady (and he drew to my ear) pity my weakneſs—your charms and my unworthineſs have made me offend—forgive—forget—

And addreſſing Lady Preſton and her brother—Go on, my Lady—go on, Sir—purſue the favourite theme—I'll praiſe with you the moſt amiable, the moſt enchanting of all paſſions—the only one that can endear life—I'll extoll all the ſhapes which the benevolent deity chuſes, or is forced to aſſume.——

aſſume.—Let us celebrate the rapturous illuſion—

Stop, delirious man, cried Lady Preſton, ſtop your raving fancy——encreaſe not, by your enthuſiaſm, the fierceneſs of a paſſion already too lively——ſpare our ears the fond expreſſions——remember we are profane, and unwilling to be initiated in the myſteries of ſo tremendous a god.——

Was I to tell you I was vexed at Lord Pelerſton's uneaſineſs, would you believe me, Victoria ?——"No"——well then, adieu.

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LETTER XII.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

WIT, affability, and good manners, Carolina, were abſolutely excluded from ſupper. Our party of pleaſure was transformed into a downright Meeting of the County. Never were my ears ſtunned with ſo much ſlander and impertinence. The ladies were as ſanguine in their defence of patriots or miniſters as if they had been emulating one another in dreſs and wit, or caballing for a favourite actor. I had ſcarce ten minutes of tolerable entertainment——So many people of rank, and hardly one of

of common ſenſe and breeding!—I was ſick, ſick to the heart———twenty times did my watch tell the hour that they might go———Oh! Carolina, I will not be ſad again—I have no encouragement—the remedy is infinitely worſe than the diſorder.

So diſagreeable was our company, that imprudently comparing their behaviour with that of Sir John Modiſh, I could not help eſteeming him in proportion as he differed from them.—I wiſhed him preſent to ſee in my eye the juſtice I did him.—It had pleaſed me to give him that proof of my impartiality—I would have diſplayed the utmoſt complacency—my ſorrow would have vaniſhed—for amid ſo many fools, how engaging a man of parts!

I am afraid, Carolina, I ſhould have badly ſupported the character of miſtreſs of the ceremonies had he been with us—I would have looked, talked, liſtened—aſſuredly there would have been more diſorder and confuſion.

Never was Froſby more evidently neglectful than at that very time when he might ſo eaſily have amuſed me—ſo eaſily fixed my thoughts to himſelf alone.

Perpetual whiſpers were exchanged between Miſs Elliſon and him—he looked penſive and perplexed, and twice coloured in ſurpriſing my eyes upon him.—I ſaw Miſs Elliſon ſlip, with the greateſt privacy, a paper into his hand. Being inconſiderately fluttered at it, I inſtantly made a ſtep towards them—"It may be a ſong." That idea made me go back to my chair.

chair.—"How fooliſh I was!" ſaid I when I had ſat down, "what are their concerns to me?"—And no longer did I reflect upon them.

Mrs. Brenton had been a more ſtrict obſerver.—Some words Froſby had, in her hearing, ſpoke to Miſs Elliſon, awaking her curioſity, ſhe earneſtly applied herſelf to watch his looks, follow his motions, penetrate his thoughts. Her ſcrutiny, however, was vain———Froſby eſcaped her ſagacity, and ſhe was at a loſs what to think, what to reſolve.

10 o'Clock.

Imagining that my dejection might proceed from ſome difference between Froſby and me, Mrs. Brenton ſent for me next morning after breakfaſt to her cloſet.——

Thou-

Thou art not ſo uncommonly grave, Victoria, ſo indifferent about the objects of thy daily amuſement, without a reaſon.—If it is in the power of friendſhip, love, or fortune to make thee happy, ſpeak, and happineſs ſhall inſtantly wait upon thee—Show a deſire, and it ſhall be gratified.——

Are we not often, dear aunt, unreaſonably uneaſy?—Can we always account for a change of temper? Are we not liable to perpetual deceptions on the nature of our thoughts and feelings?——

So you know not yet the cauſe of your ſorrow?—Shall I gueſs for you?—

I heedleſsly bluſhed, Carolina, and deſired my aunt to ſpare herſelf a fruitleſs enquiry, for I really knew not any thing to diſturb my peace, but what abſolutely related to her happineſs.——

And

And 'tis not in the power of Froſby to diſturb it!——

Froſby!—I have not to complain of him——I hope Mr. Froſby will never diſquiet me.——

Never will, Victoria!—Is he ſo indifferent to thee, that even his infidelity would not vex thee?—

How you conſtrue my words, dear aunt!—

Thy words, Victoria!—I only believe thy expreſſion of them.—Wouldſt thou retract thy voice and manner?—Shall I think Froſby could afflict thee by ceaſing to ſmile upon thee?—

Cannot I eſteem Mr. Froſby, without running the danger of ſo hard a fate?—

Eſteem!—yes: you may by eſteeming him only—but if you love, as I think you do——

You think I do?——

Am

Am I miſtaken, Victoria?—Have I alſo miſconſtrued the declarations you made me of your affection for him?——You love him not, Victoria?——

Not to the degree of being made helpleſsly wretched through his inconſtancy.—

To what degree then might it affect thy ſenſibility?——

What degree!—Aſk me no queſtions, dear Madam.——My heart knows not what degree to fix--what anſwer to dictate--

Does Froſby ſuſpect the doubts of thy heart?——

Poſſibly he may——

Can he really?——Whom could he impeach for the poſſibility, Victoria?——

Whom!—you certainly jeſt, dear aunt——whom could he?——

But if he can not, how is it poſſible he may?—

He may through modeſty——through delicacy——

When

When you ſaid "poſſibly he may" did you think of his modeſty, and delicacy, Victoria?

Did you, dear aunt, give me more than time to ſpeak?——what a trial!——what a judge!——how ſeverely examined!—— Will not my aunt ſave her Victoria any more queſtions?—

I will, Victoria.——

And ſhe ſimpered at my unguarded ingenuity.

I am glad, you are not ſo ſtrongly attached to Froſby——

And ſhe ſneered, Carolina——

Were I not certain of this I would not venture to tell thee my thoughts on his behaviour of yeſterday——Since I can ſafely——but, Victoria, conſider once more before I ſpeak——perhaps you are impoſed on by ſome pique, ſome ſudden caprice——I will not have thee to upbraid me with having vexed thee——

Have

Have you any thing ſo heavy againſt him that I may not hear it without emotion?——Has he betrayed me?——

Suppoſe he has——

Suppoſe!——he has not, dear aunt——

I have but conjectures, I own, and that is a trifle——

A trifle!——

I declare, Carolina, I was not at all pleaſed with that "trifle", and my blood flufhed my face with indignation.—— Would you know the reaſon? look for it in the natural reſtleſſneſs of our heart: there, you will find it ſurrounded by vanity, ſelf-love, and an unbounded paſſion for power and pre-eminence.—What a frail creature is woman! how amazing that we are not oftener the dupes of our own inconſiſtency! Were we always to obey reaſon, what perplexities ſhould we conſtantly be involved in! Who would not trembling

receive

receive an impreſſion, venture a word, liſten to a deſire, walk, ſit, look, or ſmile? ——In what rank of beings ſhould our ſex be claſſed, were we not neceſſarily toſſed about by love, pride and folly?——No more will I apologize, Carolina, for the flights either of my heart or head——I am guilty of none, ſince uninvited they ſtrike my nerves, ſeize on my brain, and imperiouſly diſpoſe of my ſenſibility.

I will not fall a voluntary victim to the opinions of mankind, ſo long as I can unite virtue, decency, and happineſs.—Were the whole world certain I loved Froſby, if my heart ceaſed to prefer him before every other man, I would not keep conſtant through a falſe delicacy, and ſacrifice the happineſs of my life to compliments paid to the ſeeming infallibility of my taſte and judgment.

To

To keep conſtant! would virtue allow me to impoſe indifference on a man who expects an adequate return to his love?—

Were it not a moſt heinous perjury to give my hand, to ſwear for my heart?—— Carolina, the minute I perceive I have been miſtaken in my ſentiments of Froſby—— the minute I cannot, with honour to myſelf, accept of his homage—that very minute will I refuſe to liſten——ſilence his ſighs, and avoid the prepoſterous language.

2 o'Clock.

My Victoria will not then agree with herſelf, ſaid Mrs. Brenton, with the ſofteſt harmony in her voice, the moſt ſenſible concern in her looks——You love not Froſby——

Froſby——yet when I mention but conjectures againſt him, thy heart immediately beats the alarm, thy ſoul ſtarts up with indignation.—

I wiſh, dear aunt, my heart lay open before you, that you might know all the hidden ſprings of its contradictory motions——I am really unable to diſcover the ſecret chain by which they are linked.—

How ſhould I not err on the nature of ſenſations, of which I am not the author? But, dear aunt, mind not my involuntary exclamation—tell me of Froſby.——

Did not you often obſerve him yeſterday privately diſcourſing with Miſs Elliſon?—

I did.—You don't imagine from this, that Miſs Elliſon——

I will not ſo far affront thee, Victoria, as to entertain a ſuſpicion, ſhe is thy rival—

thou

thou haſt nothing to dread from her charms—I only fear there is ſome intrigue myſteriouſly carried on between Froſby and ſome lady to whom Miſs Elliſon is a confident——I heard him ſay, "I beg you will keep her from raving and writing to Lady Victoria."—I was ſo ſtruck with the unexpected expreſſion that I could hear no more.——

Theſe words, Carolina, and the paper I ſaw Froſby receive from Miſs Elliſon, were very ſtrong temptations to conclude him guilty.—Many lovers have been condemned upon leſs evidence—I could not, however, take upon me to arraign his probity.

Froſby, dear Madam, has too much honour even to think of a baſe action. His proceedings were ever noble——his behaviour might defy the eye of envy—ſo long as he continues to talk to me of love,

love, be certain he will never talk of it to another. I alone engage his thoughts, poſſeſs his heart, flatter his imagination—from me alone does he wiſh for happineſs.

Froſby has honour, religion and humanity: he glories in the character of an honeſt man, and delights in diſcharging its duties.——Whoſe favourite or benefactor is he not?—Is he not the father of the orphan, the protector of the unfortunate?——Are not idleneſs, miſery and deſpair removed from every place where he is maſter? Who ever incouraged induſtry, or rewarded merit, with ſo much generoſity?——No: I will not harbour a thought againſt his integrity——he may be indiſcreet, but not criminal.—I will not judge him on inſignificant words, and

brood

brood on ſecrets, which by his ſilence, muſt be of no moment to us.

Can a man ſo univerſally reſpected, dear aunt, create either hatred, or jealouſy, in the breaſt of your Victoria?——Would not you deſpiſe the niece you ſo tenderly love, was ſhe capable of debaſing herſelf ſo far as to diſregard the worthy object of the public eſteem?—

I commend thy generoſity, Victoria—I honour the benevolence of thy heart, but Prudence bids thee look more attentively to thyſelf.—

How ſhall I not ſcorn the man I miſtruſt?———If ever I ſuffer ſuſpicion to enter my heart, my reſpect, my love for Froſby ſhall be no more.—— Never but from full conviction of my wrongs, will I admit the injurious thought—till then I'll diſbelieve the poſſibility.———

I'll

I'll watch for thee, Victoria.———

Why has Sir John fled from us, Carolina? Where is he?—What can he be about?—No news yet from him———almoſt a fortnight!—I hear a coach———'tis not he, Carolina, alas! it is not he———

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LET-

[illegible] to leave, which by his fi[illegible]
[illegible] of a moment to us.

[illegible] is universally respected,
[illegible] consolidate himself, or jealou[illegible]
the breast of your Victoria?——W[illegible]
we you delight the more you fe[illegible]
love, was the capable of debasing h[illegible]
[illegible] to disregard the worthy obj[illegible]
the public views?—

I commend thy generosity, Victo[illegible]
pleasure the benevolence of thy heart
Prudence bids thee look more attent[illegible]
to thyself.—

How shall I not form the mean
evil?——If ever I suffer suspici
enter my heart, my respect, my lov
Freshly shall be no more.—— N
from full conviction of my w
admit the inj[illegible]hough
disbelieve th[illegible]ity.

I'll watch for thee, Victorin,——

Why has Sir John fled from us, Caroline?
Where is he?—What can he be about?
No news yet from him——Almost a week,
Night!—I hear a coach——'tis not he,
Caroline, alas! it is not he——

LETTER XIII.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

HA! ha! ha! I muſt laugh, Victoria; how can I help it!

"Froſby loves——he has no faults when he talks of love." Ha! ha! ha!—"If he offends, I rave myſelf into hatred of the man——if I ſee ſorrow in his looks, he no longer is guilty—I ſigh and love again."——Ha! ha! ha! Now Froſby may hang or ſhoot himſelf, if he pleaſes——is it not ſo, Victoria?

Long

Long is it ſince I compoſed the *oraiſon funebre* of thy paſſion for Froſby. 'Tis ſo charming a piece! what a pity thou haſt never read it!——Thou ſhalt ſee how curiouſly I unfolded the miſtakes of thy heart—with what ſagacity I foretold that Sir John——bluſh not, Victoria——thou haſt ſaid enough to perſuade me Sir John Modiſh is poſitively the man who will make thee "ſigh and "love again."——Thou aſſumeſt thy ſevere airs, Victoria! why then I will wait thy leave to write thou loveſt him. Ha! ha! ha!

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F LET-

LETTER XIV.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

DISSIPATION, I implore thy friendly aid. Thou alone canſt infuſe pleaſure into my heart——revive drooping deſire——awake my ſoul, and give life to my exiſtence.

Too long have I neglected thy enchanting remedy—now I muſt—will ſubmit to thee, and drown my enamoured ſpirits in the deluding cup of tranſitory joy.—No longer will I ſigh away the bloom of a life too precious not to be ſpent in continual raptures.

Let thoſe whom frozen blood, or a ſtupid diffidence engage to conſtancy, kneel at

at their idols' feet, adore their impertinence, deify their caprice, and tamely wait for the uncertain hour of bliss———far from my youthful veins be the languid circulation—let the wound I received from the lovely eyes of Victoria be ever so deep, I will undauntedly bear with the pain, and heal it on the feeling bosom of a kinder mistress.

Certain that to blunt the keen edge of passion, it is not reason, but passion we must employ, I will sally from my retreat, invite the ladies of the county to a ball, and, with the triumph of a Sultan, gaze, admire, feel——and be happy.

Mistake me not, Frederick, I am not so displeased as to imagine Lady Victoria has her equal amongst them———No: I cannot oppose their beauty to her form, their levity to her discretion, their art to her

ingenuity———but what hopes do I not entertain from that art, and that levity!

Are not the tranſports theſe inſpire as fierce, as delicious, as thoſe of mutual love?——at my age, inviſible———inſenſible is the difference.———

Who can reſiſt the tempting languor of a fond eye—an inviting ſmile—an attitude voluptuouſly ventured?

What emotions warm not our breaſts at the ſight of a ſprightly dancer! Mark the rapidity of the movements——the bending and raiſing of the animated ſhape—the wantonneſs of the feet——the fire of the eye———the ſqueezes of the hand——the trembling of the lips———the elaſticity or the boſom—the——often——how often,

Fre-

Frederick, have the cares that perplexed my heart been loſt in thoſe parties where youth and beauty contend for our love and admiration!

Oh, Lady Belmour!——to thee, as to the ſupreme relief which my benign ſtar paints to my fancy under the moſt inchanting colours———to thee I fly———I fly———no longer will I delay.

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LETTER XV.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

HANG all lovers!—Nature aſſuredly was compelled to create, right or wrong, when ſhe gave life to the odious beings; would ſhe otherwiſe have formed them of impertinence and folly? Hang them all!

Lord Pelerſton dares to put on an angry look if I laugh, and tell him not why. All my thoughts, it ſeems, ſhould be centered in one, and that one inceſ-

inceſſantly upon him; I ſhould have no other ſenſe but that of feeling his worth.

He follows my eyes, watches my features for an extraordinary beating of my heart, counts every ſmile, envies every whiſper, ſtartles at every ſtep. If I turn to the left, I ſee him: if to the right, him again.—His behaviour is intolerable—too ſevere a trial to my forgiving temper—I cannot, will not, let it paſs—I will reſent it.

I really believe the man fancies himſelf already a huſband, ſo ungenerous are his ſentiments of me.———I alarm him! he ſhall ſuffer for his groundleſs ſuſpicions.—He loves as one would hate.———His miſtruſt is downright contempt—a downright inſult to my virtue.—So many ſymptoms of jealouſy—and all ridiculous—

all the work of his reſtleſs brain!—not one juſt cauſe—I'll give him ſome—I will be revenged.

He who talked ſo true—he was all art.——He lulled my heart into a deep calm——I never once thought it was in his nature to deceive, ſo well did he conceal his jealous diſpoſition—I ſhall infallibly deteſt him.—With ſuch characters life muſt be a perpetual torment.—Oh, Lord Pelerſton! provoke me not—I have not yet ſaid I love———ſtill I may hate you.

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LETTER XVI.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

I Have ſeen him, Carolina, I have ſeen him—Sir John came this morning—the lovely day increaſed in beauty——joy titillated my heart———enlivened every ſenſe, and reſtored them to their wonted harmony.———Carolina! Sir John was not the man I have known theſe four months paſt—I will not attempt to repreſent the outſide he wore to-day:—the change ſcorns all deſcription.

Whence the careleſsneſs of his carriage, the levity of his converſation?——— Is indifference the cauſe?———His love, impatient of contempt, could not laſt long——how happy he is to have ſubdued the hopeleſs paſſion!——had you any notion he could ſo eaſily have triumphed over it?——

Guard, Carolina, guard againſt writing any more that Sir John loves me —Wert thou here, how thou wouldſt bluſh for thy perpetual blunders!

What an unfeeling heart is thine! Thou knoweſt nothing of love—it is yet a ſecret to thee———The art of aſſigning their proper value to a look, an expreſſion, an air, is above thy ſkill, my dear Carolina. Why do I ſcold?——— Thy miſtakes are of no conſequence to

me

me——Can't I coldly ſmile at them, and even compliment thee on thy ignorance? Art thou not happier with it, thou my gay Carolina? Would not a ſigh, a reverie, a languiſhing mien, diſfigure thy beauty, and frighten thy graces away?

Lord Pelerſton may tell you the contrary: believe him not, unleſs, from an extreme diſlike to an impertinent world, you chuſe to bury yourſelf in a dreadful wilderneſs.

Who can long endure the preſence of lovers?——Did you ever behold the odious ſcene, Carolina, without inſtantly meditating a precipitate retreat?——Is not their joy a puniſhment——their ſole attention to themſelves a vexation——their whiſpers a torment——their ſmiles——believe not Lord Pelerſton,

or

or bid adieu to thy charms, thy amiable vivacity, and the admiration of thy acquaintance: if thou doſt, I tell thee thou ſhalt be neglected.

To the unfortunate, how hateful the ſpectacle of another's happineſs! Few men would ſee a kiſs ſtolen from thy bloomy lip, without envying the invader, and, in their heart, wiſhing for a ſhare in his theft.

Expect ſenſibility, not generoſity, from mankind; for 'tis more natural to pant after a good, than to endeavour to deſerve it.

3 o'Clock.

3 o'Clock.

But for his uſual politeneſs and decency, Sir John would have had no remains of himſelf.

Willing to conceal my obſervation, leſt he ſhould indulge his vanity with a comment upon it, my gaiety was nearly equal, if not ſuperior, to his.

I received his compliments, paid him ſome, and even told him his "not having had it in his power to make one at our concert" had been a ſenſible diſappointment to us.

He replied with a provoking ſprightlineſs, "he had been unhappy ever ſince "that

" that day, as ours was the only com-
" pany that could give him real ſatis-
" faction.

" The accounts of his ſteward, the cares of a large family, were heavy burdens, and took up thoſe hours he wiſhed could be wholly devoted to pleaſure."

He had a mind " out of mere charity to himſelf to ſhare theſe mighty troubles with an agreeable Lady."

But where ſhall I find one who will dare to engage with me for life?—Would not the chance run ſtrongly againſt her?—Don't you think, my Lady, it will be extremely prudent to keep my heart?———Who would welcome, and uſe it in a friendly manner?---

I am quite of your opinion, Sir John: in the uncertainty of the reception your heart may meet with, it would be inconſiderate to venture the offering of it—you might expoſe yourſelf to be humbled—

May not I hope for a better fate than I am aware?——

Away then with your diffidence, Sir John——don't tell us of prudence, of fears——

Oh! that they were not ſo well founded!——

Don't you diſgrace your character by ſo much modeſty? I thought a courtier was naturally preſuming—never out of conceit with himſelf——

Your notion is very juſt, my Lady: I have not the aſſurance to contradict it. Courtiers are ſeldom men of ſenſe. As they have no need of it to pleaſe, to be reſpected

reſpected and promoted, wonder not at their vanity, inſolence, and ſtupidity.

How come You to differ from them?—

Only by accident, Madam. Diſcretion breaks upon us by fits, as frolics upon men of judgment—they are more or leſs frequent according to circumſtances.—

What are theſe circumſtances, Sir John?——

An excellent education which teaches us moderation and the love of our country———ſelf-intereſt which aſſumes every ſhape to gratify its wants——the ambition of being eſteemed by people of merit——

Have you none of them at court?——

Many in appearance—few in reality.

But among the ladies, Sir John?——

The ladies, Madam!—Were the men worthy of them, no nation upon earth would be ſo great, ſo happy as ours.—Nature ſeems to delight in favouring them,

them, and neglecting us.—What kingdom can boaſt of more accompliſhed ladies than England?—What court is adorned with a Harriet S*******, a Carolina Pelham, an Almeria C********, an A******r, a G***r, a——

At the firſt and every A—Sir John had my name on his tongue—Was it not very kind in him not to mention it? I think he is the only man whoſe compliments I ſhould at preſent diſlike to hear—ſhould I not betray too viſible a concern?—

What is your real ſtate? aſked I ſmiling.

None, Madam. A medley of nature, art, virtue, and ſelf-intereſt, it is impoſſible to fix on that to which I particularly belong.——

If your heart is a compound of ſo many ingredients, how ſagacious, Sir John, muſt

must that lady be, who ſhall attempt to diſtinguiſh your love from caprice, vanity, ambition, or avarice! I am ſure, ſhe muſt be exactly framed on the ſame principle to ſucceed.—Is there ſuch a lady in Cumberland?——

There is one, my Lady, to whom my heart, free from allay, would ſincerely open itſelf—but as I don't ſee you diſpoſed to pity me, were I to declare my paſſion, and prove unſucceſsful, I will not name her.—

You apprehend I would betray you—

Though ever ſo certain of your generoſity, Madam, I would ſtill decline naming the lady, unleſs aſſured of all your intereſt in my behalf.—

Am I ſo intimately acquainted with her as to be able to ſerve you?—

You are.———

And he looked earneſtly upon me.

I promiſe you nothing, Sir John.——

I'll

I'll keep my ſecret, my Lady.———

Your chearful countenance, ſaid Mrs. Brenton, countermands the intereſt you ſolicit.———A lover ſeldom beſpeaks our favour with an air of indifference.—Why don't you diſſemble, that you may engage Victoria to befriend you ?———

Had you at firſt, Madam, generouſly whiſpered me that advice—but now it were vain to put on a vapouriſh face, and a weeping eye.—How could I ſo unſeaſonably forget I was a lover ?———

6 o'Clock

6 o'Clock.

Sir John, after having agreeably jeſted on the part he ought to have played, deſired our company to a ball and ſupper he propoſes to give next Thurſday to the principal people of the county.

"I would not, ſaid he, aſk any body, not even the woman I love, till I knew whether Mrs. Brenton would deign to accept the invitation."

My aunt having promiſed, he turned to me——

You have already denied me one favour—

Will the granting of this compenſate for it?

He

He took my hand, ſmothered a ſigh—
You will come, my Lady.—
I will, Sir—

And away he went.

You perhaps imagine, Carolina, that the heart had a great ſhare in this converſation—that ſome parts of it were ſpoken with the accent of love, and that undoubtedly Sir John and I underſtand one another extremely well.—Nothing of what you may imagine has happened. Paſſion never once appeared in his voice and action—no, not once.

"Did he think as negligently as he talked?"—

I believe not—

"Had he an equal right to conjecture the ſame of thee, Victoria?"———

I believe he had.———

"Could

"Could he from this conjecture hazard a ſmile—drop a word?"——

No, no, Carolina, he could not.——

Don't aſk me why I refuſed him my intereſt with the lady—I ſhould be at a loſs for an anſwer—I really know not one that could ſcreen me from thy ridicule, and by no means do I chuſe to be humbled.

Let Sir John, and Sir John alone, diſcuſs the denial every way—If there is one of any advantage to him, truſt to his vanity for the diſcovery—and then it will be nothing to me, ſince ſurely I did help him to it.——I ſee thee ſmile—ſmile again—Obſtinate girl, wilt thou always have thy own way?——

Brenton-hall—176—

LET-

LETTER XVII.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

WHEN the ſoul is, on a ſudden, forced into a fretful mood, flattery is not more welcome to a coquet than—what a coward I am! the word is dead on my lip.——Victoria, is it not very hard, that we women ſhould, in a minute of impatience, feel an expreſſion riſe from our heart to our tongue, and not dare to give it life?——down again, muſt it retreat——'tis murder.——Decency! to obey thee is ſometimes provoking!—I can't help it—I will—"The deuce take him"!—'Tis ſo trifling——yet how it allays one's ſpite!—

ſpite!——once more——The deuce take him! now, Decency! reſume thy rights: I am myſelf again.

Here is a letter from Lord Fanſly; if after thou haſt read it, thou refuſeſt to join with me in a hearty "Deuce take him," I'll hate thee.

To Lady Carolina Pelham.

Madam,

Deſpiſe me not when I aſſure you that, confiding in my love, and the honeſty of my heart, I thought I deſerved your hand, and was capable of making your Ladyſhip happy.

What I wanted in eloquence, I had in ſenſibility.——Never myſelf when I beheld you, I was naturally awed into ſilence

lence or confuſion——I could not but admire and adore.——

Many talk of love—few know it. Studied words——preſence of mind——flattery——theſe are not the colours it delights in.—I practiſed no arts to wheedle your ladyſhip into attention——never was I guilty of a borrowed glance, of a falſe tear, of an unfelt ſorrow.——I ſaid, "I love you, Carolina"——then again—"I love you." The expreſſion of theſe words was all the wit I boaſted;——any other had wronged your charms.——Alas, Carolina! had You loved, my confuſion had been ſenſe——my blunders vivacity—my character an honour to the age.

Diffident of my own abilities, I ſeldom oppoſed an other's opinion.——I could

not tell a ſarcaſtic ſtory——laugh a lady into the knowledge of her folly, or by a ſupercilious look, affect a contempt of men——Hence my ſtupidity—hence your diſlike.—Had I amuſed you, I had been formed of every excellence—my faults—I would have had no faults——Oh! Carolina, Carolina! you hated me for my very virtues——But forgive——'tis not you I ſhould upbraid with the odious injuſtice—it ſprung from your father's will—that will alone has cauſed my unhappineſs.

In me you ſaw a huſband—you had no choice to make—the conſtraint was too great—you hated me even before you felt what it was to love—that conſtraint juſtified your prepoſſeſſion—you could not but hate.

Why

Why did Lord Pelham, who knew ſo well that Love ſpurns compulſion, lay his commands upon you !———why were you ordered for my wife !—His friendſhip has undone me.

Carolina ! the generoſity of your brother has made you free——now your partiality will ſubſide——no longer can you be prejudiced againſt me.———You are free——then I am a new man——a man you never ſaw——a man you never ſpoke to———my love itſelf will be a novelty to you——Oh ! Carolina, ſuffer me in the croud of your admirers——If one among them has more merit———is more worthy of you——I ſhall be eternally miſerable———no matter——I will pray for your happineſs.

FANFLY.

Paris—June—176—

Men, Victoria, are ſurely very impertinent creatures. Does Lord Fanfly mean I am a fool?—I miſtook his character!—wronged his parts!—never knew his merit!—What aſſurance!—had none but myſelf ſeen or heard him—why then—poſſibly—one might—No—ſtill would not he be in the right—Am I not a judge of what is pleaſing or hateful?—He appeared at every place of diverſion—never miſſed a drawing-room day—no party in which he did not intrude———how could he avoid being known and laughed at?——Already ſo foppiſh, and not above one month in Paris! how eaſily he grows ridiculous!

Though the good or bad opinion of Lord Fanfly be of no moment, yet I cannot bear his doubts of my judgment.——Self-love has drawn up the accuſation—no matter———'tis an attack on my ſagacity——

city—You will think me very ſilly, Victoria—but I ſincerely wiſh to be eſteemed, even by a fop.

Shall I believe I really wronged his Lordſhip——was really impoſed on by prejudice—really blind to his virtues?—Oh! Victoria—what a fall!———how it would humble me!

Lord Fanfly would infallibly have a ſuperiority over me.—His ſight—the ſight of a man we have injured muſt be intolerable.—How my heart would pant! it would break, Victoria, were I deſignedly guilty of an injuſtice—I could not forgive myſelf—no: I never could.

My c ntemp of Lord Fanfly has perhaps influenced others.—The thought is torment—had he deſerved that contempt,

my pity ſhould have ſpared him—it was ungenerous to turn his misfortune to my glory—How weak I have been!—my diſlike is not an excuſe—I was wrong.——

When I was in Paris, I heard of a Marquis de GRIMALDI, a knight of Malta, who, having money and no wit, kept an abbot to compoſe his letters. Has not Lord Fanfly, like the marquis, a chaplain to help him to ſenſe and delicacy?—— This queſtion, Victoria, I put to my brother. He ſmiled, ſaluted me, and left the room.

A ſmile! a ſalute!—I will not take them for an anſwer—they are too expreſſive—Is it poſſible I could have been deceived?—How ſtupid we are when prejudiced!——I'll compel my brother to ſpeak—Victoria! if I have injured Lord Fanfly—

Fanfly—though I hate him, I'll do juſtice to his character, and own my folly.—He aſks leave to renew his viſits—as a friend I'll grant, as a lover I'll deny it. If I write or ſay, "my Lord, I was a fool when I thought you had no ſenſe," ſurely the man muſt be ſatisfied.

London—176—

LETTER XVIII.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

ON my honour, my Lord, of all ſublunary trifles I like women beſt—next to them, your good ſenſe———next to that, a puppet-ſhow——next to that—next to that———what elſe is not a puppet-ſhow?

If reaſon was not laviſhed away on man, that indiſcreet animal, I might—but I hate to demonſtrate.———

Does not the taking of ſnuff, my Lord, diſplay to advantage, a white, round, well-turned arm, and add to the graceful open-

ing

ing of a lady's fingers?——What think you of a gauze handkerchief careleſsly laid on a youthful and panting boſom——— of a ſparkling eye?———

I once gathered a roſe: delightful perfume! exclaimed I, what can be the cauſe of it?—A fairy paſſed by, and ſighed upon it, ſaid a young and ſprightly lady.

Laugh not, Frederick, at that eye, that handkerchief, that pinch of ſnuff, that roſe, and that fairy—they are ſo many emblems—But, huſh!——my company is coming.—

Thurſday 5 o'Clock.

Quickly lend me thy ear, Frederick—— I have but a minute to whiſper thee, that, though the ladies have ſurpaſſed themſelves in elegance of dreſs, propriety of co-

lours, and the art of conveying a deſire from every feature, they are all eclipſed, all excelled, in the very charms they have to boaſt.

It is not to the elaborate art of the Toilet, that Lady Victoria is indebted for her ſuperiority: no: ſhe is in her native beauty—Nature alone has ſhe to thank—have we to commend.——

43 minutes paſt 5 o'Clock.

Four minutes more with thee, Frederick.

I have not diſpoſed of my hand, ſaid Lady Victoria to me juſt now. I depend on you, Sir John, for providing me with a partner.—

Generous Lady Victoria, I will not abuſe the truſt you deign to commit

to

to my care.—I ſhould be unworthy of the favour, did I apply it to my own advantage.—

I went immediately to Froſby, and preſenting him to Lady Victoria——

This is the gentleman, Madam, I beg you will accept.—

Both were ſurpriſed——the ſacrifice was viſibly too great——I would have hated myſelf had I been incapable of making it.

The conſciouſneſs of having had in my power the poſſeſſion of the ear of Lady Victoria, for the whole night, is ſuch an abatement to Froſby's ſatisfaction, that I rather look on him with pity, than with envy.

Imagination! thou the benefactreſs of mankind, wrap me in the veil of perpetual illuſion!

The

The amiable condeſcenſion of Lady Victoria was remarked.

Men, indeed, are unaccountable creatures, ſaid Lady Belmour. Sir John loves, and he can not only reſign to his rival a hand he was complimented with, but dares to appear elated with the loſs——Had I ſuch a lover———

What then, my Lady?———

What then, Sir John!———Why I would deteſt him in proportion to his generoſity———To yield me ſo eaſily to the man he ſhould hate! and he would talk of love to me———

My Lady! my Lady! Were you Victoria——were I Froſby, how differently you would think, how differently you would talk!———Would you forgive the intruder on your pleaſures?——would you have him indiſcreetly ſeize a favour your heart had not intended for him?—To believe

lieve that the gratification of vanity can ſuperſede the feelings of love!——monſtrous, my Lady, monſtrous indeed!——

Patience, I'll come back preſently, Frederick.

Half an hour paſt 6 o'Clock.

How came You then, Sir John, to diſregard that mighty love, and prefer Froſby to yourſelf?——Is it eaſier for you to conquer than for us?——You love not, Sir John, elſe would you eagerly diſpute the victory.——love bears the firſt ſway in our hearts——it gives laws, and will ſubmit to none.——Regardleſs of the happineſs of others, its own delight is the center to which all its deſires are inceſſantly directed.——Generoſity, Sir John,

is the mark of an indifferent ſoul, a certain proof of the abſence of paſſion—you act with indifference, though you think you act with magnanimity.

This ſally of Lady Belmour, joined to the vivacity with which ſhe delivered it—I don't ſpeak to thee of her eyes, Frederick, of her eyes———what wantonneſs in her eyes!——has made ſuch an impreſſion upon me, that I am fully reſolved on purſuing, and very cloſely too, an attack I formerly made upon her.

7 o'Clock.

Lady Belmour is not one of thoſe beauties that compel you to ſtop, to gaze, to exclaim "how beautiful ſhe is!" the paſſion ſhe inſpires carries inſtantly with it

love,

love, deſire, and impatience to expire in her arms.——Her inviting eye, Frederick, leaves no time to admire the fineneſs of her complexion, the degagé of her gait, and the charms of her action.—You feel yourſelf more forcibly inticed to enjoy, than to talk——to devour each part with inflamed kiſſes, than to praiſe its delicacy——to feed greedily on the rapturous banquet, than to think of the power to do it honour.—Pleaſure colours her lips, ſoftens her voice, winds round her neck, enlivens her ſteps, and triumphantly ſits on her ivory boſom.—She talks—no matter what ſhe ſays——'tis not the words but the opening of her mouth that conveys the ſeduction.——What a brilliant ſet of teeth!——what freſhneſs!——what a luxuriant humidity!——

This

This picture deſtined to Frederick, the diſcreet Frederick, by the lover of the virtuous Lady Victoria!——— No, my Lord: I am not the lover of Lady Victoria.—Spite of my heart, I renounce the title, ſince I deſpair to reap the benefit of it.

20 Minutes paſt 7 o'Clock.

When Lady Belmour liſtens, Frederick, ſhe ſpeaks to your heart.—What advantages has not a ſeemingly artleſs coquetry over the timorous countenance of genuine decency! it invades with an irreſiſtible authority, and at will diſarms reaſon, the defenceleſs bulwark we ever oppoſe

oppoſe to pleaſure, its unconquerable enemy.

Would I infallibly knew how a heart feels.—How the ſight, the ſight alone, of beauty heightens the velocity of the blood through each vein—gives ſenſation to every nerve———and life to every organ!———

Whether I ſought to delude myſelf, Frederick, or really felt what I have expreſſed, I heartily gave my ſoul up to the flattering proſpect of happineſs.

I have—and will have no arms againſt wit and beauty, ſaid I to Lady Belmour.—Freely I yield to you the victory.———Had I not heard you, I would ſtill have remained in my former error—your beauty began the diſcovery—your eloquence

eloquence has perfected it.—Certain I loved not, I doubt no longer I adore you.

I hate a compliment paid to my vanity at the expence of my judgment: it ſuppoſes a foible in my mind, and that ſuppoſition——

Is only, my Lady, the work of a miſtaken delicacy.—Let your charms anſwer for my veracity.——

Had not Lady Victoria in a more eminent degree the ſame guard againſt your inconſtancy?——

You have convinced me ſhe had it not.

You are obſerved, Sir John: Lady Victoria keeps a watchful eye upon you.——

Let her ſee your triumph, my Lady. Pride in it, and I am happy.—Still do you queſtion my ſincerity?—

Is it not curioſity rather than love?—

This

This is no new deception—'tis love, love itſelf——the very love I ſwore to you—"remember the fatal ſneeze."—*

At the word "ſneeze," Lady Belmour looked confuſed, and played with her fan.

Are you for cards, or a dance, Sir John?—

For either of them, both, or none, at your pleaſure.—

If, like Lady Victoria, I ſhould leave to you the diſpoſal of my hand—

I would not part with it—no other ſhall enjoy the ſenſual touch—lead the lively ſhep—exult at your muſical voice—delight in the loving ſmile—think of the coming bliſs.—

Words, mere words, the effect of domineering youth, of paſſionate ſpirits—

* See the tenth letter of the third Volume.

If ſo---how naturally deceitful is their fire!---May it as charmingly from my lips paſs into thy heart, dear Belmour!---

What have you ſaid?---

She haſtily roſe up, and cried out, "when then ſhall we dance?"---

8 o'Clock.

The evening goes on, Frederick, in a continued round of pleaſure. To render it more extenſive, I ordered, an hour ago, that all the appartments, adjoining to the gallery where we dance, ſhould be laid open, that every body might ramble without deſign, or retiring on purpoſe.

Though

Though I concealed my intention under the convenient pretext of keeping cooler, I ſoon perceived it had been underſtood.

One couple drew near, and went back—another ventured——a third followed—in leſs then twenty minutes each lover had to thank me for a ſtolen kiſs he owed to my taſte and humanity.—Had Victoria to thank me?——I know not, Frederick, but aſking her, when ſhe came to the gallery again, how ſhe liked the pictures I brought from Italy, her anſwer was, "I ſaw none."

A glowing envy ſparkled on my countenance—Oh, Victoria!—Victoria! muttered I. Then turning quickly to the gay lady Belmour—ſhe looked—ſhe talked,

ed, Victoria was forgot—Frosby was forgiven.

The facility of withdrawing, whispered Lady Belmour, is a very happy addition to the pleasures of the evening.—How came you not to think of it sooner?—Had you any objection to the gratitude of your friends, or did you reserve for a few of them the freedom of those retreats?—Have you made them public, only when their privacy was no longer required?—Tell me, Sir John, whom have you favoured with them?—

You alone, dear Belmour, had a right to their secrecy—you alone my heart wished to see in them——you alone had rendered these minutes the happiest of my life.——

You alone, Sir John, was capable of so

ſo indiſcreet a deſire——of ſo gallantly denying my curioſity.——

Ah! Belmour! you love me not ſince you don't believe me.——

Love you, Sir John! who ever told you I did?——

Your ſoul too honeſt to diſſemble——too expreſſive to want words, has communicated the ſecret to mine—both have exchanged it——both——

And my ſoul told it you?——

It did—it actually does—but for this place, both——

I'll fly——I muſt fly——leave me thou too amiable, too powerful tempter—leave me—let me not be gueſſed.——

I obeyed leſt our trouble ſhould betray the too lively feeling.—

Not love, but its ſupreme madneſs, raged in my blood.——I ſat down, ready to faint under the preſſure of pleaſure.——

Frederick,

Frederick, let me fix on the paſt extacy.———

Half an hour paſt 9 o'Clock.

Awake, thou creator of tender emotions, awake, or I loſe thee.———Every eye is dying with the pleaſure that animates thy face———awake, or I loſe thee.

Grateful to my ear was the rapturous voice———every avenue to my heart opened to the benevolent expreſſion——— Oh! Belmour———ſhe walked———I dared not to follow.

By all the charms of mutual enjoyment ſhe ſhall be mine!———This, Frederick, was the ſolemn oath reſulting from three

hree minutes reflection—ſhe ſhall be mine, echoed my fiery imagination.—My ſenſes trembled with delight—my ſoul ſtarted up for immediate reality.———

Let impotency rail at the ſublime activity of youthful ſpirits——ſneer at the noble flights of nature—envy and deſpair, its perpetual attendants, will amply revenge the feeling, happy lovers.

Often has a word of Victoria damped my pantings after a ſenſuality ſhe was not to procure———often has ſhe from my lips expelled the too forward ſoul, and forced deſire to retreat into my heart——— often——too often, alas! has ſhe glorioufly triumphed over my inchanted ſenſes.———Heavenly maid!——

Victoria! Victoria!———but I love thee not---this day is Lady Belmour's.

17 Minutes paſt 10 o'Clock.

Taking counſel of my deſires, I looked for the ſpeedieſt way of gratifying them.———Could I not unperceived ſteal ten minutes from ſo many hours we ſtill had to be together, and make her acceſſory to the theft?——— This plan was the eaſieſt of execution—was it poſſible?

My hopes, Frederick, were not ſo ſanguine as to rob me of my political abilities.—I thought ſurpriſe, and an unexpected attack would infallibly enſure me ſucceſs

ſucceſs——how and when I was to fall on the unſuſpecting prey, I left not to fortune, but to my aſſurance of victory.

In matters of ſuch great concern, a cool head, I own, will draw from the moſt inſignificant opportunity both the merit and reality of a triumph.—But then, can a cool head be ſupremely bleſt with the genuine poignancy of the intoxicating laurel?—What are the enjoyments of vanity to the extatic pantings of the heart?—What is that deſire, which can wholly ſubmit to reflection, and diſdain the unforeſeen, critical minute for the laboured ſcheme?

My eagerneſs miſled me into twenty fruitleſs expectations.—In vain did I forcibly increaſe my attention: my heart oppoſed the endeavour—action, action was

the perpetual cry of my longing ſpirits.—Action, action! ſighed I, when ſhalt thou enebriate every ſenſe! Rapturous was each attempt——fainter each reſiſtance.——Once, Frederick, once I caught the friendly conſent glance on her animated features—I flew to fix it—I—"How handſome he looks!"——By heavens! it was the voice of Victoria——I turned about——ſupper is ſerved——to my next, Frederick, to my next——

Half paſt 11 o'Clock.

Modiſh-hall——

LET-

LETTER XIX.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

FY upon the naughty man! he makes me weary—impatient of his company.——Was he half ſo expert at pleaſing me, as he is at tormenting himſelf, my heart would burſt with love———as it does now with ſpite.

I will have none of thoſe refined tempers——their extreme ſenſibility is death to love and the pleaſures of life.—A fly that reſts on my neck—a pinch of ſnuff from Mr. Preſton's box—the ſhadow of a coxcomb I chance to walk upon—an ac-

tor I look at, or applaud, are ſufficient to alarm Lord Pelerſton, and fret him into nonſenſe.—He will tell me an hour of that "pinch," of that "ſhadow," of that—Lord Fanfly was but a novice in the art of teizing.———I could command him out of my apartment with one glance—But this Lord Pelerſton—there is no ſuch thing with him. He braves my frowns—nay inſolently attempts to banter me out of them.—

Sure you are not angry, ſays he to me, with an inſidious air; you are not angry—are you? and he ſteals a kiſs of my hand. I turn from him—then will he take hold of my ruffles, gown or apron, fall at my feet, drop a tear, ſigh, ſwear, implore my pardon—I forgive—the ſcene renews—There is no bearing this.—Let me ſee.—Do I love him?—This minute I do not.—

Well,

Well, I'll wait till I am cool to put the queſtion again.——If I can then ſay——— coldly ſay, 'I do not, away for ever with his whims, no longer ſhall I ſuffer them.

Lord Fanſly, or his chaplain for him, ſays that a lover cannot be witty.—Were this true, Lord Pelerſton is not a lover, for no man gives his thoughts a more elegant, expreſſive turn.———His words are exactly the picture of his ſentiments——tender, if loving——impertinent, if jealous.———His imagination—— I will not praiſe that imagination which vexes me ſo much—But here he is—— heigh ho!

2 o'Clock.

No ; you could never gueſs what that man has done.——Are you a conjurer, Victoria?——"No". Then attempt not to gueſs it.

The prettieſt exploit that ever could be achieved!—his lordſhip is not formed of common materials, I warrant ye, Victoria———his fancy—what a fancy!—not one Italian in a hundred can boaſt the ſame.———Hear and marvel.

Lord Pelerſton had a large roll of I knew not what in his left hand when he entered the room.

Here

Here, here, my Lady, and he pointed to it with his fore finger, whilſt triumph brightened every feature, here they are—I have ſearched every place; I have them all. No longer ſhall they attract the ſtaring eye of the impertinent multitude.——

What is it, my Lord?—

The liberty this people enjoys is turned into downright licentiouſneſs, my Lady; they have no reſpect for beauty—they dare to draw, to ſell—

What?—

A picture which I will perpetually gaze upon when I am not with you—a picture which was abſolutely profaned by being expoſed to public view.—

Whoſe is it, Sir?—

Your's, dear Carolina.——

And he unrolled the noble purchaſe.

I ſhrugged up my ſhoulders, and, forcing a ſmile——

The print-ſellers are undoubtedly very much obliged to your lordſhip——what a quantity!——they ſurely thought you had large orders from the country.—Did you pay the full price, my Lord?—

How unſeaſonable your jeſt, Carolina! is it thus you repay my delicacy—my ſolicitude for your glory?——Would not this *mezzotinto* have been in every hand?—Would not every body have had it in his power to look on this feature—on that—to be loſt in the charm of theſe eyes—the bloom of theſe lips?——Oh! Carolina——this neck——this boſom——what agony when I think of the pleaſure this picture had given to a warm imagination!—

This is downright impertinence, exclaimed I, ſtepping into the drawing-room. Follow me not, Sir——and I ſhut the door.

Carolina!—

Carolina!—Carolina!—

Not a word.—I was ready to cry with vexation. My heart was oppreſſed—my face glowed with anger—I bit my lips—ſtamped with my foot—tore my fan——

Carolina!——

I ſtole through the oppoſite door, and flew down ſtairs to my mother.

5 o'Clock.

What's the matter, Carolina?—What vexes my girl?——

That man, my Lady, that Lord Pelerſton——

And a tear fell on her hand.

Some new whim, I ſwear, ſaid Lord Pelham——

Very

Very new, brother. He ſaw my picture at a print-ſhop———grew immediately jealous of every man who paſſed by, and has brought me the whole impreſſion.——He expected my thanks for his folly, nay wondered I did not applaud the heroic deed.———

Ha ha ha! this is new indeed, ſiſter.—Why he took the only method to make thy picture common: they'll indulge his folly, I promiſe thee———

Have I not a curious lover, dear Madam?

He does love thee, Carolina—his caprice therefore muſt be forgot. Sit down, be not troubled for a trifle—is Lord Pelerſton gone? if not, bring him hither, Frederick, and we will make their peace.——

Stay, my Lord; his preſence would now be inſufferable——I am——oh! brother, that

that man! his jealouſy pierces me——— I fear him—he will make me unhappy.—My Lady, can he love yet perſecute me ſo?—Since I liſten to him, can he think that another man—the thought is inſult—what an opinion has he of your Carolina when he can ſuſpect her of coquetry?

Injuſtice and love, Carolina, often go together.——The ſtronger the paſſion, the greater the fear of loſing its object.——— Fear reaſons not—pity then, and forgive Lord Pelerſton———

Alas! my Lady——ſpite of myſelf—— I love him.——

Ring the bell, Frederick—compoſe thyſelf, Carolina———

A ſervant came—Lord Pelerſton was gone.

I am ſad, very ſad.—Adieu.

London, 176—

LET

LETTER XX.

[illegible] to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

WHEN thou haſt read this letter, Carolina, I know thou wilt immediately paſs thy judgment on the ſituation of my mind. I know it: no matter: I will not anticipate a reject to thy tribunal, and [illegible] my doom.

[illegible] on pain of my utmoſt diſpleaſure, to believe my inability of determining between likelihood and reality, till I have ſeparately ſent thee my own opinion of myſelf.——Should thou murmur at my commands, I—

"Cruel

" Cruel Victoria" !

I hear thee, Carolina, I hear thee, I ſincerely own I was both unjuſt and imprudent.—That I may not, by forbidding thee to write, entice thee to take up the pen, and by tempting thee, ſhare in thy diſobedience, I ſubject thee to no penalty, and lay no conſtraint upon thee——

Seductions are laid for me wherever I tread———love lies in ambuſh wherever I move——To what place ſhall I fly for ſecurity ?—Froſby, who ſhould protect me, Froſby ſides with my enemy !——he gives my heart no diverſion, and leaves me defenceleſs againſt the attempts of my fancy.—It ſeems he diſdains a conqueſt which never was diſputed———he reſts after his victory, and indifferently ſleeps upon his laurels.

Oh !

Oh! my vanity, keep ſtill—be not offended at Froſby's neglect—juſtify not my wanderings with the ſpecious pretext of his wrongs againſt thee!—I will liſten—I will yield but to love and equity.

I formerly complained of the injuſtice of Froſby——I was diſpleaſed with his doubts, his fears, his curioſity.——Many times have I been tortured to the ſoul with his indiſcretion.——Was it not, Carolina, to that perpetual agitation in which my heart was kept up—to that ſucceſſion of different emotions which furniſhed fancy with no other object than Froſby, that he was indebted for my extreme partiality?

Is he not now unſeaſonably eaſy?—Why does he give me leiſure to reflect?—So well acquainted with the reſtleſſneſs of human

man nature—with our natural aptneſs to change, ſhould not he keep me conſtantly feeling and deluded?

Is not an implicit compliance with our deſires as fatal to a lover, as an eternal reſiſtance to them?——Has he leſs to fear from our indifference than our diſlike?

In ſociety the complaiſant are ſeldom agreeable——this you have often remarked, Carolina. In love why ſhould it not be the ſame?——Alas! why don't we value a good, but in proportion to the difficulty of obtaining it? Why is a "Yes," when ſeldom or never attended with a "No", generally odious?

I muſt attempt to increaſe my inclination for Froſby by calling to mind his virtues, and all the reaſons I have to eſteem and love him.—Attempt! ſo quickly

ly do I forget how to write? Muſt I learn after having naturally been ſuch an adept?

How ſhall I know I love, ſince I am afraid I love not Froſby? May I not labour under the ſame ſymptoms, be equally inſenſible of the difference, and miſtake again?—Nay, this very inſtant, am I certain love lies not dormant in my heart, ready to riſe at the voice of Froſby?—Deciſive, Carolina, deciſive indeed muſt the circumſtances be, which ſhall eradicate every doubt.

Friday 1 o'Clock.

We went yeſterday to Modiſh-hall. I will not ſpeak to thee of the elegance and

and ſplendour of the entertainment—that you expect not from me. Thy curioſity pants only after novelty—thou wilt hear but from my heart—I'll pleaſe thee; but, Carolina, if I chuſe to forget any thing, neither gueſs nor mention it.

Confident he had an uncontrouled right to dance with me, Froſby thought it very needleſs to ſolicit my hand: to ſhew him, however, that his pretenſions might be queſtioned, I left the diſpoſal of it to Sir John.

I told him, with a ſmile, I truſted to his choice for a partner. He appeared ſenſibly delighted with my ſeeming generoſity:—he bowed, talked, heſitated, took my hand—then beſtowed it on Froſby.—Surely, thought I, the man is either very indifferent, or very refined in his love and deli-

cacy.—As for Froſby, he dilated his fine, large, black eyes, and ſtared, and ſtared—

Pray, my Lady, how came Sir John by ſuch a power?——

By me, Sir——

And I curtſied.

By you!——

And he mumbled——

What did you mean?——

Mean, Sir!——I turned to my ſeat, and left him to ſtare.

"What did you mean?"——Was the queſtion ſo impertinent, Carolina?—"What did you mean"?——Having not before clearly underſtood what I meant, Froſby rectified my judgment, and ſoon could no longer plead ignorance.

What did you mean, my Lady?——

And he ſat by me.

To dance, Sir——

With Sir John?——

I made

I made no reply.

With Sir John?—

I ſuppreſſed a bluſh, and looked diſpleaſed.

If with me, ſhould I have owed the obligation to Sir John? Would not you have ſpared my vanity the gratitude he has forced upon me?——

I got up, and ſtepped to Mrs. Brenton.

3 o'Clock.

Were it not, ſaid I to myſelf, for the indiſcretion of Froſby, I ſhould not know how far I was intereſted in my complaiſance to Sir John.——How ſerviceable is jealouſy to let us into the ſecret of ourſelves!—"jealouſy!" read, caprice, Carolina;

rolina; for Froſby, a few minutes after, looked guilty, repentant, and upon my kindly looking upon him, was as tranquil, as happy——will nothing force him out of his lethargy?—Is he in no danger ſince he foreſees none?

Whilſt I was reflecting on the late diſcovery, my eyes were rambling about in ſearch of—of Sir John.—I will not anſwer, Carolina, for the rambling of my eyes--That is ſurely as involuntary as thought, ſenſation, or the frolics of thy lap-dog?——Doſt thou imagine I could diſtinctly, and at the ſame time, think of Froſby and look for Sir John?———No matter what thou imagineſt.—What is thy opinion to me if I am pleaſed to diſregard it?

Sir John was in a very cloſe converſation with Lady Belmour—both—I'll tell you

you what I gueſſed from the lovely motion of their lips, and the expreſſive caſt of their eyes——they were talking, not of love, Carolina, for the picture was too enlivened, but of gallantry and pleaſure.

Why does Sir John, who never believed in the conſtancy of women, chuſe to compliment me with a quality he has not once met with? Who has aſſured him I deſerve to be ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed, or that I value an honour which I cannot enjoy but at the expence of my ſex? What has induced him to think I poſſeſs a virtue he ever thought a chimera?—Is it not amazing, that paſſion, which generally leſſens every obſtacle, ſhould magnify his fears, ſo as to blind his underſtanding?——*Entre nous*, Carolina, what is conſtancy but inſenſibility, or a tranſient ecſtaſy of the ſoul?—As this is not an enlightened

lightened character we owe to reaſon, but the mere effect of chance, how fooliſh to perſuade one's ſelf of its permanency !

Why is Sir John ſo conſcious I will never change——ſo conſcious of my love for Froſby ?—I hate that ſingularity——How extravagant to torment himſelf from an uncertain apprehenſion of tormenting me!—Can a diſcreet man create himſelf terrors, and yield, without examination, to the ſlight appearance of danger ?

Sir John will keep from me out of reſpect !——He will attempt to pleaſe Lady Belmour !——He will attempt to recover his liberty—to welcome diverſions of which I partake not ! Have I any need of ſo much reſpect, Carolina ?———Have my looks threatened him with an immediate diſmiſſion, if he preſumes to con-

conjecture I love not Froſby? My eyes, dear Carolina, my eyes, you may believe me, have never expreſſed ſuch a menace. —Where has he got the unlucky notion? —Not from me I am ſure.

But for this prepoſterous blunder of his reaſon, would he delight in ſmiles I do not return, in words I do not ſpeak, in a ſhape I do not animate, in ſenſations I do not cauſe?—I think not, Carolina. I have converſed with his heart in ſpite of all his efforts to conceal it from me.

Prudence and delicacy have ſuppreſſed, but not annihilated his feelings. Love intrudes in every glance, in every ſtep, in every motion: it lives in his voice, breathes on his features, embelliſhes his manners.— So ſteadily diffident!——I don't under-

ſtand that——I had no idea of it.——You miſtook the man, Carolina, ſurely you miſtook him.

. . . . . .

. . . . . 5 o'Clock. . . . . .

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"Is not their behaviour a diſgrace to decency?" This I was inconſiderately going to aſk Mrs. Brenton, when recollecting I had often been beguiled about the real ſpring of my thoughts, I ſilenced this, leſt ſpite rather than virtue had inſpired it.

If virtue, argued I with myſelf, can ſo readily impeach, cenſure, debaſe, in what does it differ from malice and ſelf-intereſt? Since ſo apt to find fault, am I not the ſlave of a ſecret paſſion, and indulging a

vice,

vice, rather than favouring a virtue?——I blushed, Carolina, at my intended indiscretion: but was my heart less affected with the mirth of Sir John—with the mirth of Lady Belmour?——No: it was not.

"Whom will Sir John dance with?" was the next question I trusted to my heart, and I went in quest of the lady I was to envy. The assiduity of Sir John clearly pointing to me Lady Belmour, I presently played against her charms the indiscreet eye, and the still more indiscreet wit, of an injured rival.

Soon was I silenced, Carolina. Lady Belmour is all beauty and accomplishment. —I had not the assurance to be unjust—satire died on my tongue——I applauded, sighed——applauded and sighed again.

Thy eyes, Victoria, would betray me into a contradictory knowledge of thy heart, were I to realiſe whatever they ſeem to expreſs. Thou art not jealous, I hope—art thou, Victoria?———

Jealous, dear aunt!

A half bluſh glanced on my cheek.

Cannot I undeſigningly look on Lady Belmour?——Jealous of Lady Belmour!——what concern have I with her?——Has Mr. Froſby———

Froſby!———

And ſhe maliciouſly ſimpered upon me.

Half paſt 6 o'Clock.

Why, Carolina, have I neglected thy inſtructions againſt ingenuity? How neceſ-

ſary

ſary would it now be to look gay and indifferent, though my heart is full and uneaſy! I'll read thy letter again, that I may beware of the man whom I—I—find the word, Carolina——that I may beware of Mrs. Brenton—beware of all who, tempted by love or friendſhip, will vex me with their conjectures, or their jealouſy.

I will baniſh nature out of my countenance, and aſſume the garb of a courtier—I will—what a ſhame was it ſuſpected I fear to be underſtood!———Humble me not, Carolina———write me not a word about Froſby—about Sir John—unravel not the perplexities of my heart.

My aunt's obſervation made me diffident of my air, the too faithful mirror of what paſſed in my heart. I ſhook off the power,

ful ſenſibility, and diſpoſſeſſing my eyes of all their ſoftneſs, hearkened to Froſby.

Froſby had the humanity, by his conſtant attendance, to help me out of myſelf. I know not what cauſed him to be more than ordinarily chearful and entertaining; but he had almoſt ſkill enough to diſſipate my thoughts, and remove Sir John and Lady Belmour from my mind.

After a country dance, in which, by his ſprightlineſs, he had added to the natural vivacity of my ſpirits, we ſtepped to the next room to breathe the freſh air. My fan fell—we both inſtantly ſtooped—in getting up, our lips met—I'll tell thee no more.—Write me, Carolina, why I did not exclaim againſt the accident—why I was not diſpleaſed—why Froſby was agreeable

to

to my eye—anſwer theſe queries, if thou canſt.

8 o'Clock.

I had hardly come back to the company when Sir John aſked me how I liked his pictures—His pictures! I had ſeen none.

The rooms are full of them——— ſeen none. ———

He contracted his brow——ſtammered out my name, and with an angry look turned about, I think, on my honour, provoked and ſwearing at me.—

Is the man ſo mighty fond of his pictures that he muſt neceſſarily be diſpleaſed with me for not having obſerved them?——No: Sir John is not ſuch a coxcomb——ſome other reaſon——I looked for it in his heart, and there I read in love's characters——"Had it not been for the preſence and converſation of Froſby, Victoria had zealouſly paid her homage to Raphael and Corregio."

What would it avail me to diſſemble the ſatisfaction I felt at the ſecret intelligence?—That thou mayeſt not exceed the bounds of probability, Carolina, and be more intent on the marvellous than the natural, I declare to thee I was pleaſed——

"Pleaſed, Victoria!"——

Well

Well, then, I was delighted.—Reſtrain thy fancy, unleſs thou chuſeſt to affix an impropriety to the ſenſation which ſlid into my breaſt——I was delighted with the ſally of Sir John, and applauded his anger.

I promiſed myſelf, Froſby ſhould meet with no more accidents, and even grudged the advantage he had got in the laſt.——I will plainly tell thee all, but banter me not——I rubbed my lips in order to ſweep away the kiſs, as if by that action I could forget it had been ſealed upon them.

"How childiſh!"

Explain to me, my moſt reaſonable Carolina, how it is childiſh, when the re-

ſiſtleſs emotion ſprings from nature, love, and pleaſure?

9 o'Clock.

Froſby, having been ſuperlatively charming, had at laſt overdone himſelf.——— But for a few ſparks of love and imagination, which now and then graced his tongue, and ſhone in his carriage, one would have ſaid he had never felt, thought, or ſpoke.

Not far from him ſat thy Victoria, ſeemingly as tired and ſtupid, but in reality loving, ſenſible, and happy.

Our

Our hearts, Carolina, are on all ſides inveſted by powerful enemies—precipices ſurround us—Prudence faintly pointing out the almoſt inviſible path we might eſcape through, we naturally ſet forwards, and blindly plunge into the dreadful abyſs.

Imprudence is our lot.—Who will convince me it is not a duty to ſacrifice common ſenſe to the firſt impertinent emotion which ſeizes upon us? Were not folly inherent to extreme ſuſceptibility, ſhould we ſo often renounce reaſon, and ſwerve from a neceſſary law?

There are objects which at once affect and rule the ſoul; in vain would we attempt to reſiſt an impreſſion that comes to invade, to conquer, and not to parley.———The attack, too ſudden and too fierce,

fierce, roots out the very deſire of prepa-ring, or guarding againſt it—then muſt we ſubmit——ſo did I—Fortune alone will I gratefully thank for not having been ſur-priſed, and totally vanquiſhed.

11 o'Clock.

Certain that the heart of Sir John gave no aſſent to whatever his imagination might welcome, and his tongue pro-nounce, I ceaſed to perplex myſelf with the temporary honours of Lady Belmour, and had the courage to dart perpetual looks at them.—I grew familiar with the ſight———I never dreamed, Carolina, it was ſo full of dangers.—

Pleaſure

Pleaſure which adds to the beauty of an handſome woman, produced the ſame effect on Sir John.——His eyes blazed a ſubtle poiſon, which imperceptibly entered every vein, and like an indelible dye penetrated my inmoſt ſoul.—I—he—I know not, Carolina, how to make thee ſenſible of the rapturous diſorder he cauſed in my boſom——how to explain the real ſenſe of my feelings.——"How handſome he looks!" exclaimed I aloud. —Mrs. Brenton trod on my foot, and Sir John, who was near us, immediately wheeled about.

So deluſive was the incentive which had forced theſe words from me, that I did not think of them, even after they had been uttered——The pain of my toe, and

the

the motion of Sir John, quickly set me to rights.

How severely was I punished, Carolina, for not having believed in thee! Had I renounced ingenuity as thou advisedst me, should I have been so nigh falling a victim to an indiscreet impulse of nature?——— I did not soon enough recover my countenance——the loving and overjoyed eye of Sir John encreased my trouble——I saw I was detected——what to do? I thought of Frosby, and presently darted upon him the remains of a confusion he had not inspired. The deceit—why was it necessary!——the deceit succeeded to a miracle.

Too generous to suspect me of hypocrisy, Sir John looked vexed, and his cheek reddened with all the pride of self-love.——

love.—Pleaſure no longer played on his features——ſpite made him walk from me—ſpite brought him back.—"None, ſaid he, but the prepoſſeſſed Lady Victoria, would have hazarded ſo prepoſterous an exclamation—Froſby handſome!" and the audacious man flew away to Lady Belmour.

Will this man never ſhow his love but in a fit of anger?—My ſmiles, I am certain, told him not to be vexed——had I ſpoke, my language could not have been more plain and expreſſive—how could he miſtake them for contempt. He has the fineſt eyes I ever ſaw, yet knows not how to uſe them. I have heard of men who have no ears for the unhappy, but never of one who loved, and would not ſee he was loved again. Sir John is that original; his reaſon, like

gold

gold in the hands of a miſer, is of no ſervice to his happineſs. Unleſs I ſay expreſsly I love him, he will not believe it, nay then, perhaps, will think I banter.—Hear what I was compelled to do, and how little he underſtood me.

12 at Night.

Having left the gallery, after a few minutes converſation with Lady Belmour, ſhe came to me.———At the time of my extreme fondneſs for Froſby, I had not the tenderneſs of her looks.———Her boſom panted ſo—I was confounded. She complained of the heat, and walked to the rooms; my heart would not ſuffer me to let her go alone; I followed, and joined her in the furtheſt.

There

There is no breathing in the gallery, ſaid ſhe, with an unaffected ſmile, I wiſh a window or two were open.

Let us ſtay here, Madam, I'll open one.——

I had hardly thrown up a ſaſh-window, when coming behind the curtain—"Speak not, Victoria, my jealous Lord is in ſearch of me. Let us ſecretly enjoy his ravings."——

He preſently appeared, and ſeeing not his Lady, imagined ſhe had entered a room whoſe door was ſhut. Thither he ſtepped—"There ſhe is," cried he with a curſe. Hearing a noiſe, he liſtened—— "They ſigh," and another curſe. His Lordſhip grew extravagant, and exclaimed aloud, "Now am I a cuckold!". The door

door would have been broke open, had not Lady Belmour left her retreat, and upbraided him with his impertinent ſuſpicions. He inſiſted, however, on looking behind the curtain, and was not a little ſurpriſed to find me there inſtead of her gallant.

Whilſt ſhe was ſcolding, and he begging pardon, I could not help thinking a rendezvous had been concerted.

Sir John! Sir John! ſighed I, I muſt encourage thee to ſpeak thy love, or Belmour will tear me from thy heart.

He came, darted at me an equivocal look of love and anger, took her Ladyſhip's hand, and vowing ſhe ſhould not leave "her partner for her huſband," led her in triumph to the gallery. The audacity

dacity of the man, though aſtoniſhing, was ſtill leſs ſo than the paſſiveneſs of Lord Belmour. The injury he had done his wife by his idle exclamation, had abſolutely taken from him the power of reſenting the familiar behaviour of Sir John, and the yet more familiar compliance of her Ladyſhip. Had I not been intereſted in their amour, I would have laughed at the ſtupid figure he made. Lord Belmour ſeems to love his Lady only to have a plauſible pretext to make her unhappy. Love excuſes all, they ſay, I aſſure that his Lordſhip enjoys this privilege in its full extent.

As they walked, and Lord Belmour and I followed, ſome whiſpers between them made me uneaſy. I mended my pace, and juſt as they exchanged a very expreſſive ſmile, forgetting I was cloſe to

Sir

Sir John, I trod on his heel. The quickneſs of his motion prevented my retreat. His head diſordered my toupee, and his mouth glanced on my cheek. He thought he had a right to my lips, but whilſt I defended them, my boſom, unguarded, became his prey.—He kiſſed it. My firſt impulſe was diſpleaſure—the ſecond forgiveneſs. He appeared delighted with his theft——his looks pleaſed me. Had I returned the anſwer they ſeemed to beg, I believe he had fallen at my feet, and diſſipated all my fears of a rival. I dared not, Carolina——Love made me forgive, but modeſty commanded my countenance; no anſwer was given.

10 o'Clock.

10 o'Clock.

The country dance was not finiſhed—we ſat down to wait for the next. There was a chair next Lady Belmour, but Sir John looking as if he deſired a ſeat between us, and her Ladyſhip affecting not to comprehend that language, he ſtood before us, till a lady by my ſide getting up, I took her chair and gave him mine.

'Tis kind—very kind. You read my wiſh, my Lady.———

Better than you do mine, Sir John.—

This, Carolina, was my mental anſwer—my verbal was nothing. What elſe are words diveſted of ſentiment?

Mrs. Bathurſt, my good old friend Mrs. Bathurſt,

Bathurſt, paſſed by us, ſtopped, and taking Sir John's hand and mine in hers—

How fine a couple! what a pity theſe hands are not to be joined!———

I heard, and heard not, Carolina.

I deſerve not that happineſs, Madam—

Still did I chuſe to be abſent.

Very few men do, Sir John.———

And putting my hand in his———

Would they were never to be parted!—

Thank you, Madam.———

I ſmiled, and very faintly drew my hand back.

The eyes of Sir John brightened with love.

Is it poſſible?—Are you in earneſt?—You thank her!——

And he trembled with joy.

Are you mad, Sir John? ſaid Lady Belmour, laughing. Would you have

Lady

Lady Victoria anſwer one jeſt but with another?——

Is it ſo, Lady Victoria?——

Could I ſay no, Carolina?

It is, mumbled I.——

Fool that I am! how could I miſtake it!——

He did not ſay that, Carolina, but expreſſed it in his manner of leaving his chair.

Believe me, my "it is" was as good an "it is not" as ever was pronounced—— He took it for a banter.

He ſtooped to my ear.

The deſpair of pleaſing you is enough, add not to it your contempt.——

And without waiting for my anſwer he mixed with Lady Belmour in the dance.

His "deſpair of pleaſing" joined to the deſpotic voice of modeſty, which, in deſpite

pite of my heart, commands my obedidence, will at laſt, I fear, prove mortal to my happineſs. Could I ſpeak, look, behave, more purpoſely to make him ſuſpect I love not Froſby. Did not all this together tell him, "Sir John, you may talk—if you do, I'll liſten."—A great deal more could he have added to this——but he choſe to be deaf, blind, and ſilent.

The whole evening Sir John divided his aſſiduity between Lady Belmour and me. To her he was paſſionate—to me reſpectful.——I wiſhed him to miſtake——he did not. Never till then did he dart ſuch ſullen looks at Froſby: often did he avoid ſpeaking to him, even to affectation—Sir John loves me——yet will not expreſs what he feels! 'Tis provoking.

Brenton-hall, 176—

LET-

LETTER. XXI.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

BY heavens it was unfair!—but for her ingenuity which I adore, though injurious in the higheſt degree, I would remember her virtue, only to exert all my powers againſt it.—What tranſport to have that virtue panting in my arms after its own deſtruction—ſeeking for life in its own death!———Was not my ſoul ſufficiently racked by the certainty of her paſſion for Froſby, that it ſtill wanted the odious exclamation, "how handſome he looks!" added to its exquiſite ſufferings?

"How handſome he looks!" I turned ſo ſuddenly, that Lady Victoria having not had time to remove from her eyes the complacency natural to the ſentimental expreſſion, I was tempted—yes, Frederick, tempted, to think myſelf its only object. Her intent look, her ſudden bluſh——my eagerneſs to believe, could not but deceive me.——Pleaſure too haſtily told her modeſty the deceit. I welcomed.——It gave too ſudden life to my motions.——She ſaw it—was troubled—and immediately deſtroyed that deceit by ſtepping to Froſby. What an inſult to my pride and the delicacy of my feelings! Shame ſucceeded the imprudent joy.——O, Victoria! too defenceleſs am I againſt thy beauty——too readily do I yield to the ſmalleſt hope of pleading thee.

The

The more flattering my miſtake had been, the more ſenſibly did I feel its folly. Enraged at the fond diſtinction conferred upon Froſby, I approached Lady Victoria.——Though by her countenance ſhe beſpoke my reſpect—though every feature deadened my indignation———I dared to arraign her judgment——to reproach——Let me draw a veil, Frederick, over what is paſſed———I will read Boileau's Satire on Women, and deteſt them——deteſt them !——don't you laugh at the impertinent reſolve? Deteſt women! ah! let Nature firſt blunt the fineneſs of the organs ſhe gave, or totally deprive me of every want !—deteſt the only delight we enjoy in life—be a ſtranger to the bewitching ſenſations they cauſe! How ſhall I attone for the profane thought? Well ſhould I deſerve to be the ſcorn of the fair, were I

any longer to entertain the perverſe deſire!

1 o'Clock.

A few words with Lady Victoria had wrapt up my whole countenance in a gloom——my ſoul was ſunk in grief——pleaſure had forſaken my veins and vaniſhed from my heart.

But five minutes out of my ſight, ſaid Lady Belmour, ſmiling, and Sir John ſo wonderfully altered!—whence the amazing change?——

The new ideas which had intruded into my mind, rendering me abſolutely impaſ-

ſible

ſible to her allurements I yawned an unintelligible anſwer, and caſt a ſtupid look upon her.

Amazing change indeed!——

Is it you, Belmour?—and I awaked.—Stop, thou reſtleſs tormentor: ſtop, have mercy on me.——Imitate not the Gods who delight in inſpiring fruitleſs deſires—be generous, not unrelenting as they.—My ſadneſs, dear Belmour, is thy work; ceaſe to pleaſe—to heighten the impreſſion of thy charms, or ſuffer illuſion to yield to reality.—My ſoul is on the wing—let it fly—fix on thy lips—play on thy boſom, and revel in thy arms.———

I rouſed thee not to lull my virtue aſleep.—Thy voice is an enchantreſs I cannot help liſtening to—think not of me.—

Not think of thee! may that minute be my laſt!—

Well, think but ſpeak not.—There is a poiſon in thy words which charms every ſenſe, and calls my ſoul up to thee.—— Nor look for I ſee in thy eyes but the raptures of ſin.—Heigh-ho!—

I welcomed the heigh-ho——in return breathed an inflamed one upon her breaſt, and gave it ſuch life, as thy imagination, Frederick, can never comprehend. Its inſtant elaſticity warned me that her ſcruples were ſilenced.

Her modeſty winked at my invitingeye—conſent was on her lips, deſire in every motion, tranſport in every ſtep. I whiſpered the ſcene of bliſs—ſhe anſwered with a half-ſmile, and whole-complying bluſh.

It

It had been written, Frederick, above, below, or round me, in the book of unfeeling fate, that happineſs ſhould for ever keep in my view, and I for ever balked of its enjoyment.

If at any time a rational man believes in demons and other fantaſtic beings, it muſt certainly happen when his body and ſoul are both ſtruck with the electric fire of love. Thus circumſtanced, folly is reaſon.—Now, Frederick, am I tempted to think that ſome buſy-brain of an he or ſhe ſpirit is hovering over my head, intent on miſchief, and happy in tormenting me.——Ethereal rogues! would I could ſee and finger you! how I would reward you for your officiouſneſs.

5 o'Clock.

I was ſlipping out with the diſcretion of a devotee going to a *rendezvous*, ſometimes careleſsly, ſometimes on tip-toe, ſometimes turning my head through fear of ſpies, when a letter upon the floor attracted my attention.

It was directed to Froſby. My firſt impulſe was to give it to him, but as he was at the further end of the gallery, and I would, by no means, loſe the progreſs I had made towards the door, I put it in my pocket.

At

At the end of the long range of rooms that were laid open is a ſalloon which my father, of libertine memory, had called The Salloon of the Gods, whoſe amours were repreſented in all that luxuriancy of paſſion, which their godſhips alone could feel and inſpire. The floor and ceiling he inlaid with glaſs, that by the inverſion of the figures he might revive his imagination with a glance at the charms of his female viſitors. Thither he led the unſuſpecting virgins ungenerouſly to ſmile at the bluſh his eager look and their ſurpriſe naturally cauſed: thither I flew through a back ſtair to enjoy a more ſubſtantial bliſs.

Three, four, five minutes elapſed—no ſignal was given. I peeped through the key-hole, ſaw nobody——drew my ear to

it, heard but the noiſe of the dancers——came back to my ſeat.

Happening to recollect Froſby's letter—we are not at all times generous, Frederick!—I opened it, and ſeeing the name of Emily Cranmer——honour vaniſhed, man prevailed——I read it.

7 o'Clock.

Under what ſign of the heavens have I been born, when I am compelled to think that the ſevereſt misfortune, which I ſhould welcome as the moſt favourable event!

I have it in my power to root my rival from the heart of Lady Victoria, and I abhor

for the thought.—How could ſhe ſupport the knowledge of his perfidy? how guilty is Froſby! how deſervedly contemptible! —Far is Victoria from ſuſpecting the daily falſehoods he impoſes upon her!——Read the curſed letter, Frederick; read it, and ſay, if thou dareſt, that moſt men of character are not more than rakes the enemies of virtue. I march publicly ſurrounded with dangers; my deſigns are trumpeted before me, eaſily may woman guard againſt them: but what arms has ſhe againſt him who talks of peace, and lies in ambuſh to attack unawares in the dark?

To Richard Frosby, Eſq.

Why, dear Richard, do you require from me a promiſe I am not able to keep?

How

how can I love you and not dread the charms of Lady Victoria? Can I be ſure of a heart you daily expoſe to her beauty? Richard! neither my ſenſibility nor thy praiſes have yet rendered me unjuſt, or ſillily vain; Victoria is, and will be, a moſt formidable enemy to me.—Of all paſſions, I know but love—of all deſires, that alone of making thee happy—of all ſentiments, the fear of loſing thee.—I wiſh and breathe but for thee.

Thou haſt taught me love—by thee was I to be taught ſorrow!—Thy tendereſt expreſſions ſoften it not—it withſtands the luxuriant kiſs.—How often, Richard, how often has it damped thoſe very moments in which our ſouls laviſhly ſighed every thought away!

I re-

I repent not of the ſacrifices I have made thee; they were my free gifts.—Could I in the critical hour when, betrayed by Miſs ******, thou ſtoleſt into the place where I bathed—when by her left alone with thee——could I talk of the church? No: thee only I thought of—for thee I deſpiſed my glory, and ſilenced my virtue.—In thy eyes I ſaw—in thy tranſports I found, the reward of the offering I made thee. Each conceſſion of my modeſty was a ſtep to my happineſs:—thy triumph was mine.—Then thou ſworeſt but love—but love! what other allurement couldſt thou have tempted me with?—But love! what would thy hand have availed me without thy heart?

Have I ever in thoſe hours when I received and laviſhed delights—when panting

ing

ing in my arms thou hadſt nothing to refuſe, but all to grant—have I ever by an artful reſiſtance, by a falſe tear, fondly wheedled thee into marriage?—Richard! dear Richard! I truſted my honour to thy love, not to thy generoſity.—Wert thou the only amiable man upon earth, I would diſdain to be indebted for thy hand to thy honeſty.

Thy love, dear Richard, is the only equivalent for my ſacrifices to thee——— the only equivalent which will ſatisfy my honour.

Oh! approach not Lady Victoria; fly from her———pity my fond, my timid ſoul——it quakes when I think of the lovely maid. Though thou loveſt her not, fly from her———her ſight may

at

at length prove fatal to thy paſſionate Emily.—Tell me not to be compoſed, or ſeek for pleaſure but with me.

EMILY CRANMER.

For once, Frederick, thou wilt conceive my feelings.—Thy honeſty needs not my love to fire thee with indignation——thy virtue has already darted the bolt of contempt——thou haſt thought of Victoria, and Froſby's crime has ſtruck thee with all its horrors.——Haſt thou ever heard of a rake ſo reſolutely wicked as the *virtuous* Froſby? No: modern men of honour alone can, under the ſanction of an uſurped reputation, thus refine upon vice, and unmoved indulge it in all its deformity. The wretch talks of love to Victoria, and enjoys all its raptures in the arms of Cranmer! Bold perjurer!—yet they all unite

unite to praiſe him——his failings are not detected, hence he has none! O, Virtue! I will hate thee—thou art more dangerous than vice: ſanctified knaves gave thee an innocent look the better to betray.

Shall Froſby's guilt be concealed from Victoria?—No: ſhe ſhall know all.—I muſt—but will ſhe believe me when paſſion pleads for the criminal?—Can ſhe read and doubt?——Unprepared for the fatal news how her heart will bleed!—Though only indebted to chance for the ſecret of Emily Cranmer, does not humanity oblige me to ſkreen her from infamy?——Who knows but both may be guiltleſs, and the letter deſignedly written and dropped by the hand of an enemy!—Froſby loves not Victoria!——Credulous Emily! ſhe poſſeſſes his heart, whilſt thou art only

the

the fancy of his youth, the amuſement of his leiſure; he carries to thee the fire he receives from her, and quenches it on thy boſom.

10 o'Clock.

Abſorbed in thought, my ears were abſolutely beggared of their faculty of hearing. Whether the three gentle knocks had been given by Lady Belmour, or her modeſty had, in my abſence, talked its curſed language, I was cheated of my happineſs.

" 'Sdeath! what's become of them! ——I ſaw her this way".——

It

It was Lord Belmour's voice. My ſenſes immediately recovered. I aroſe and tip-toed to the door. I peeped, and ſaw his Lordſhip with his arms acroſs, and his eyes fixed on the ſalloon.——— "Poor Belmour!"—exclaimed he. "Now indeed art thou a cuckold"—and he rubbed his forehead.

Not yet, my Lord, ſaid Lady Belmour ſtepping from behind a window curtain, not yet: but had you come one minute later, you certainly would.———

What aſſurance!———

It is the only anſwer to your ſuspicions.———

I'll go to that curtain.———

Have

Have a care, my Lord; your courage will cool at the ſight of the happy man—— your heart was not formed for ſuch encounters.———

What!—Lady Victoria!———

I heard no more, Frederick. My hopes being at an end, I decamped through the back ſtair, and returned to the gallery. Seing none of them, I went to the rooms.

What! already tired, ladies! come, Madam, and I took Lady Belmour by the hand, you won't ſurely leave your partner for your huſband.

No, no, Sir John, I'll follow you with all my heart.—

And

And away we tript.

Lady Belmour preſſing my hand in hers———

When thou art abſent, Sir John, I defy thee: thou canſt conquer but by ſurpriſe; I will prepare my virtue againſt it.—

And I, Belmour, will humble that virtue, elſe I deſerve thee not.———

Wicked man!——

And ſhe ſmiled "I love thee."

Wicked when I arm thee againſt myſelf!

And I returned her ſmile.

At that very minute Lady Victoria trod upon my left heel. I turned upon my right, and

and lightly touched her cheek. I was too near, Frederick, not to attempt her lips. I fought my way to them; ſhe diſputed it with a "Sir John! Sir John!" and a fall of her head backwards. In that ſituation her boſom captivating my eyes, I gave a kiſs to each of the whiteſt, roundeſt breaſts I ever felt or beheld. She inſtantly bluſhed out her indignation at my temerity, and reproached me, but faintly, as if ſhe had feared to think or talk of a kiſs; whilſt Lady Belmour pulled my hand to her to warn me I robbed her of her due.

That kiſs—that breaſt—I aſſure thee, Frederick, they reſtored me to virtue.

I cannot repent, Lady Victoria.——

I led

I led her hand to my heart which beat all the tranſports of love, and threw my ſenſations on my looks.———She loves Froſby——curſe upon him! Had ſhe but ſmiled——ſhe would not ſmile.——

Were I ſtill the coxcomb thou haſt known me, I might, from a few circumſtances which occurred that night, infer ſhe has no diſlike to me——nay poſſibly think I am not indifferent to her. She ſometimes betrayed ſo much concern at my aſſiduity to Lady Belmour——ſtammered ſuch feeling monoſyllables, that though ſhe ſuddenly reverſed their meaning I—I will not entertain the thought—ſelf love bids me reject it. Adieu.

Modiſh-hall, 176—

LET-

LETTER XXII.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

IN the name of modeſty, Victoria, canſt thou be angry, if now I ſay Sir John is the man thou loveſt? No: affectation is not in thy nature, thou wilt not be angry.

Sweet creature, thou loveſt then—— and Sir John Modiſh is the man who has convinced thee thou wert deceived, who has chaced Froſby from thy heart.

Thy

Thy miſtakes are no novelty to me. Long ago have I diſcovered thy indifference through the raving expreſſions thou coveredſt it with.

Born with exquiſite feelings, ever in want of being amuſed or affected, thou obeyedſt thy natural tendency to love, whilſt thy deluded fancy pointed to Froſby as the cauſe of thy emotion. Thou couldſt have as eaſily been ſurpriſed into an inclination for a *bird*, a *ſong*, or a *picture*. As pride delights in the moſt diſtant homage, ſo does extreme ſenſibility in trifles, or things of the greateſt moment.

Thou lovedſt not Froſby, as now thou doſt Sir John; nor hadſt thou ever removed the veil with which thy prepoſſeſſion for the

the former had intangled thy underſtanding, but for the ſuperiority of the latter which forced thee to ſhake it off, to ſee with thy own eyes, to judge with thy own reaſon.——The burning torch he has put in thy boſom, has diſpelled the gloom that encompaſſed thy ſoul, and reſtored it to the exertion of its native rights.—Too long had theſe been invaded by the delicacy of thy organs——too long had thy imagition ſwayed thy ſenſes, heightened their illuſion, and favoured Froſby.

Thou art not the firſt, Victoria, that has erred with the full belief of being in the right. Thouſands daily object to reaſon for the judge of their ſenſations.—— 'Tis the unavoidable effect of ſenſibility—and perhaps the greateſt advantage one can poſſeſs.

6 o'Clock.

Write, talk, dream as thou wilt——Sir John thou muſt acknowledge for thy victor. To that new deity wilt thou dedicate a temple in thy heart——to him devote thy thoughts, and each minute of the day.——Happy votary, whoſe ſighs ſhall be ever graciouſly received—who ſhall never be expoſed to a frown——ſhall never be denied by the benevolent God!

Now, and now only, Victoria, mayeſt thou think thyſelf fortunate, ſince thou haſt reaſoned thy heart into love, and art certain

certain of Sir John's affection.—But what will that affection avail thee, if convinced of thy conſtancy to Froſby, he has, and will have, no notion he can ever pleaſe thee?

What children theſe men are!—Hardly have they adopted an opinion, though ever ſo falſe, when they are unhappy till they perſuade themſelves its truth cannot poſſibly be queſtioned. Thus do errors of every kind ſwarm over the globe——thus do we ſeldom meet but with fools in every ſtation.—Did their extravagance hurt but themſelves, one might probably laugh at, or pity them———but when their folly endangers our peace, and oppoſes our

pleaſures, laughter or pity were ridiculous.

8 o'Clock.

Awake Sir John, Victoria, compel him to renounce the idle conceit he is infatuated with, leſt time ſhould render it too powerful. An old diſtemper yields not to common remedies; 'tis in its very beginning that a ſkilful hand muſt adminiſter the infallible medicine. Sir John to be the patient!—how weak and daſtardly are at times the moſt undaunted men!——

One

One look, one of thy languiſhing looks, Victoria, will ſuffice for his recovery.——Could he be ſo unreaſonable as to reſiſt a look!——If ſo—venture a ſmile, and I warrant him at thy feet.—His obſtinacy could not withſtand thy ſmile—with this, victory is thine.—No longer ſhall he then believe in Froſby's happineſs—no longer contend with thee but in interrupted ſighs, melting glances, fond expreſſions.—Would I were near thee when——but huſh! the ſight might be dangerous.—My heart is already too tender——it would be imprudent to give Lord Pelerſton ſo great an advantage.

Thou wilt neither look nor ſmile, Victoria———I foreſee it———thou wilt not be ſurpaſſed in caprice by Sir John.

—Heroic

———Heroic emulation!——— I almoſt repent having offered thee my advice———it is ſo ingenuous.———How could I forget we live according to the wiſe laws of Opinion, not the abſurd ones of Nature!

I will rank my jealous Lord Pelerſton with thee and Sir John.———He begs, earneſtly begs, I will pronounce the deciſive words "I love you." Till then, he ſays, he cannot be ſure of me——— every beau frighens him into madneſs. ——How ſtupid!——Are we not happier when we wiſh and hope than when we poſſeſs? I will comply with his requeſt when he again offends——I will

ſay

ſay "I love you, my Lord."——— Victoria, I will look for no other puniſhment———for no other revenge. Adieu.

London, 176——

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.